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GULLIT
The Haarlem globetrotter

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

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On the glory trail with Batistuta

Bayern
Welcome to the Munich fear festival

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Derby delight for Inter

PAUL INCE celebrates victory in last month's Milan derby at San Siro. Internazionale's win over Milan – thanks to Marco Branca's solitary goal – kept the *Scudetto* race alive, for the time being at least. But it is still Milan's title to lose. Inter, meanwhile, kept their hopes of a UEFA Cup place alive – the derby triumph was their fifth successive Serie A victory.

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Free with this issue
Part 3 of our Euro 96 guide: Denmark, France, Romania, Russia.

We still have back copies of parts 1 & 2 available. To obtain a copy, please send a large stamped-addressed envelope to the *WORLD SOCCER* office. Mark your envelope 'Euro 96 guide' and specify which part you would like.

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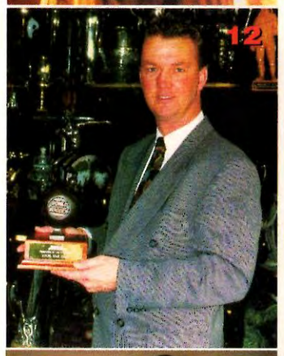

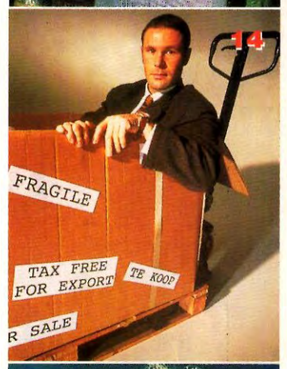

Keir Radnedge

COMMENTARY

Who can police the football police?

ARE international football's governing bodies equipped to control the game? I ask because of increasing concern that professional football business is just too complex to administer in a happily uniform way.

We have seen the problems which arose over the attempt to control agents. Now the issue at stake is transfer regulations, a subject brought to the fore by the Bosman business.

In one sense, the European Court's ruling should help football in that all the European Union countries should have to bring their transfer regulations into line. But that may be easier said than done.

In the meantime, the Bosman fall-out is revealing some anomalies. While UEFA, as a single 'spokesman' for European football, launched a vainly belated attempt to turn back the Bosman tide, several others within the European federation had already approached post-Bosman circumstances.

Countries such as France, Italy and Germany already had amended their foreign player regulations to grant easier access for EU citizens while Portugal was virtually an open door to convertible Brazilians; also, French transfer regulations had long accepted the spirit of Bosman, i.e. that a player is free of a fee at the end of his contract.

The French situation is not without significance because the French always have been among international football's leading political influences. It makes you wonder, indeed, why FIFA and UEFA did not cotton on more quickly.

Now a similarly fascinating situation has emerged in Turkey. Even though Turkey is not a member of the European Union, its transfer regulations have long mirrored the Bosman verdict. That is, although the Turkish federation's statutes have been through the FIFA spellcheck, nobody noticed that a player in Turkey, at the end of his contract, has long had the right (after a slight delay) to go abroad fee-free!

The problem with Turkey is either that nobody there knew the fact or that they preferred to keep quiet about it. After all, Turkish players could have been sneaked away fee-free by any other club in any other country.

This news may be somewhat embarrassing for Senes Erzik, the president of the Turkish federation: he also is chairman of UEFA's club competitions committee, and when talk in the committee rooms turns to the future of UEFA, it is not a secret that Erzik harbours modest ambitions of his own. No harm in that, of course. After all, in just over two years Lennart Johansson could be the new president of FIFA, and then UEFA would need a new president.

In the meantime, rather than squeal and squeak about the Bosman verdict, FIFA and UEFA would be best advised to take a lead in sorting out transfer regulation chaos before the countries all take the law – the real law, that is – into their own hands. The German federation is being advised that the clause in the standard player's contract which extends the contract automatically by a year if the transfer system changes will not stand up to legal inspection. Similarly, in Turkey, a clause in the transfer regulations offering the club the option to impose a contract extension would not stand scrutiny by the international federations.

But this is where the problem really starts: can transfer regulations be policed? Can they be simplified to wipe out all the constraining small print which opens up football to more legal challenges?

Just as referees have to earn respect and cannot demand it merely by putting on the uniform, so the international governing bodies must lead the game forward – and that means seizing the initiative.

Steppi out . . . sacked Bilbao coach Dragoslav Stepanovic

A coach for all seasons

COACHES come and coaches go. Athletic Bilbao recorded the 12th parting of the Spanish First Division so far this season when they fired Serbian Dragoslav Stepanovic after losing 1-0 at home to Valencia.

Bilbao, who won two successive titles under present national coach Javier Clemente in the early 1980s, lost patience after chalking up more than 560 minutes without a goal in their own Estadio San Mames – the so-called Catedral of Basque sport.

German-produced coaches have not suited the Basque way. Jupp Heynckes was not exactly a total success before Stepanovic, albeit a very different character. One wonders whether Steppi's larger-than-life personality was unsuited to the Basque mentality.

The last consistently successful foreign coach there was Englishman Ronnie Allen in the early 1970s. The last consistently successful coach was Clemente, himself a Basque.

Picking a coach is not just a matter of choosing someone with a big name who makes big headlines. The man has to fit the job and the stage. And the stage can change for different scenes. Schoolmasterly Benito Floro, for example, was a raging success in bringing Albacete up from the Spanish Third Division to the First. His skills were not suited for the relegation dogfight, however, and thus he was dismissed a week before Stepanovic.

All the while, Johan Cruyff carries on in the maelstrom of Barcelona – heading towards a previously unheard-of 10 years in the job. Recent rumours of his demise proved unfounded. Cruyff himself blamed "bad translations" in Holland of an interview he had given to a Spanish radio station.

Meanwhile Barcelona keep on winning while leaders Atletico Madrid keep on faltering. It would take a brave man to bet against Cruyff still being in his job – and in the Champions League – next season.

Slow below the soil

YOU WOULD have expected the Nordic countries to be in the lead when it comes to the technology of undersoil heating. Not a bit of it. Denmark took two weeks to start beating the freeze and get their season going again towards the end of March.

That's one occasion on which national manager Richard Moller Nielsen may be glad so many of his players are foreign-based. It means they will be ending their own league commitments rather earlier than his home-based players, who may now be going on right to the end of May.

To pick or not to pick?

LAURENT BLANC'S recall to the French national squad in the run-up to Euro 96 was a welcome sign that coach Aime Jacquet is not operating a blind policy of rejecting all the old guard.

That may mean a call-up at some stage yet for Eric Cantona. Not, one understands, for David Ginola. Jacquet is in a difficult position: damned if he does, damned if he doesn't. If he picks Cantona, in superbly decisive form for Manchester United, then he fears disturbing the squad's inner harmony and exacerbating the pressure created by the inevitable media circus. If he leaves Cantona out and France miss the boat at Euro 96 then it will be Jacquet's head on the block.

Vialli the militant

GIANLUCA VIALLI is one busy man these days. Not content with leading Juventus in the Champions League he has been one of the Italian players' union's chief negotiators and spokesmen in their dispute with the federation.

Reaction to the one-day strike throughout Italy varied between sympathisers and critics who were infuriated at a disturbance in the routine of the traditional Italian soccer Sunday.

When asked why a football millionaire needed to go on strike, Vialli explained: "I am one of the fortunate ones. I have no personal dispute. But most of our professional players have no proper protection for their livelihood in the case of injury or of a club going out of business. The top players all started the same way. Their concerns are ours."

Meanwhile, Vialli is considering a formal complaint about federation president Antonio Matarrese, who criticised him as "a football Robin Hood".

Last season, when a weekend's soccer was called off after the murder of a fan at a match, the entire remainder of the season was pushed back a week. This time, because of concern over national team preparations for Euro 96, the lost matchday was to be fitted in on Wednesday, April 10.

Yet the biggest loser was the all-powerful Italian Olympic Committee which oversees all sport in Italy. The strike cost CONI around £33million in lost pools income. As for Italian television, that had to make do with Genoa's 5-2 victory over Port Vale in the Anglo-Italian Cup Final!

Red first

EVER the diplomat is European Commissioner Padraig Flynn, who has been at the centre of the row over the implementation of the European Court's judgement in the Bosman case. When asked which team he supports, Flynn paused before responding: "Well, my son supports Liverpool . . ."

Not every picture tells a story

RADIO FIVE is at its happiest on a big match night. Two commentators at the game and a Gary Lineker or Trevor Brooking type back in the studio to link the programme and contribute their own opinions on the action.

But how does the man in the studio see the action? I don't believe that the BBC sends out a TV crew to a match it is not covering. Therefore, our man in the studio must be watching coverage – apart from Nottingham Forest's UEFA Cup run or the odd FA Cup tie – by ITV or by Sky Sports. Yet nobody ever says so. I wonder why not?

Referees on the spot, again

I HAD the pleasure lately of addressing the London Society of Association Referees. A fascinating evening – not least because of a topic raised in the discussion section.

The issue was one of passive offside. One of the referees, in a Sunday match, had allowed a goal when a player made a run through from midfield while two team-mates had been left high and dry by the defending team's offside trap.

Discussion varied among referees who felt the goal was the correct decision and those who believed that the players left offside might have been considered in such a position as to have been interfering with play.

But what was more intriguing was the plea raised by the referee concerned – should referees apply the laws differently to Sunday footballers, who are not supposedly as sophisticated in their application or knowledge of the laws as professionals.

That's a subject for another talk.

The trend among FIFA's panels of tame experts has been to edge down a technological path which might split the game between the professional minority and the non- professional majority. Proposals for radio links, for television replay support, for time-keeping hooters, even for bigger goals – all these would create a chasm between the top-level professional game and its roots.

And would the game not lose its romance for the amateur if he could not imagine himself running out at Wembley rather than stepping through a parkland quagmire?

Money man . . . Euro 96 director Glen Kirton with the Henri Delaunay Cup

Complex cash

EURO 96 is a financially complex business. There have been mutterings about policing costs and Aston Villa chairman Doug Ellis wants a £60,000 hand-out to cover loss of merchandising sales, but it's not all bad news – or it shouldn't be.

The local authorities of the eight venues will each receive a £30,000 grant to help with expenses. However, that has caused upset in the north-west because, while Manchester United's Old Trafford ground comes within the boundaries of Trafford Borough Council, the money has gone instead to Manchester City Council.

The wrangle will have to be sorted out by the Association of Municipal Authorities – the local government representative body which chose Manchester as the grant recipient.

Glen Kirton, director of Euro 96, says: "We put up the money, and so did the government, to be distributed by the Association of Municipal Authorities. If Trafford are unhappy they should ask for some cash from the AMA."

Lower down the Euro 96 ladder, don't forget the educational value.

They haven't in Leeds, where primary schools are gearing up for a special mixed five-a-side competition in celebration of the event. Each team will adopt one of the 16 countries and inquire into its history and culture.

Finally, did you know that Euro 96 will be seen beyond even the realm of the United Nations? No fewer than 194 countries, more than the UN membership, will be taking pictures from England in June. UEFA's commercial partner, ISL Marketing, must be delighted. ISL's original forecast was 150 countries.

COMPILED BY GAVIN HAMILTON AND JOHN KELLY

Libero

Boots and bootees

When Ecuador defender Matamba took a penalty against Venezuela in the South American Olympic qualifying tournament, his boot flew off. Both ball and boot landed in the net, but the referee ordered the kick to be retaken. This time the boot flew off and hit a post, while the ball hit the bar.

Matamba is no stranger to controversy. He is now 19 and the father of a nine-year-old son by a woman seven years his senior, whom he married when he was 10.

Not so smartie

Spanish police have arrested 24 members of the so-called *Chocolate-Culé* gang after they were caught using FC Barcelona's name in vain.

The gang were smuggling drugs into Spain from Morocco and then distributing them dressed as chocolates in wrappers sporting Barça's club badge. The dawn raids turned up 4,000 grams of hashish, 100 grams of marijuana, 143 grams of cocaine, stolen cars and guns, as well as sizeable quantities of LSD and ecstasy.

Fans in Brazil often attach a lighted candle to an ear before important matches – a tradition dating back to the first importation of slaves from Africa.

There are many other superstitions in the game, according to our Russian correspondent, Vladimir Kalinkovich, who recently returned from a visit to Brazil.

One involves a black and white dog, named Biriba, who was adopted as a mascot by Botafogo players back in 1948. The club won the Rio championship that year, and ever since then Biriba's successors have been frequent visitors.

The latest was taken to a training session just before the recent match with Santos which clinched Botafogo's first-ever Brazilian championship, and is pictured here with star striker Tulio.

Shirt Tales

Athletic Bilbao

Bilbao was the birthplace of football in Spain and British workers were its pioneers. The first organised match is believed to have taken place in May 1894 and Bilbao FC are believed to have been formed four years later by English foundry workers from Sunderland. The club merged with another club, Athletic, in 1901, and wore the red and white striped shirts of the founding members' home town club, which they still wear to this day.

Lip service

"I suppose we've come to the end of my cycle, it's just that it has happened in the wrong manner" – Parma coach Nevio Scala (right) reflects on the defeats by Paris Saint Germain in the Cup-winners Cup and by Milan in the League

"Mr Lechkov would like to play for a London club . . . Arsenal is a fine address" – Pentscho Georgiew, agent for unhappy Yordan Lechkov, on a possible end to his client's Hamburg hell

"There is no chance I would give it a second go. I would rather cart bricks for my dad in Australia" – Ned Zelic on an unlikely return to Queens Park Rangers

"If he's anything like his cousin, then he's certainly a man we can use" – Brondby coach Ebbe Skovdahl on Sylla Benmadi Muhammed, offered to the Danes by his cousin George Wean

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Wages at steak

Don't mention Mad Cow Disease to players at Brazilian club Londrina. Things are so bad that they are being paid in cattle. When president Marcelo Calderelli took over the club in the New Year, he inherited a $5million debt. Calderelli is a cattle rancher and is now paying players with his own cows (one for every point collected). Eventually the beasts will be auctioned, with the players receiving the cash.

Porto fini

One of Europe's longest unbeaten league runs came to an end, after 53 games stretching over 17 months, when FC Porto went down 2-1 to Benfica in Lisbon last month. Porto are still clear favourites to retain their title, but they face a goalkeeping crisis.

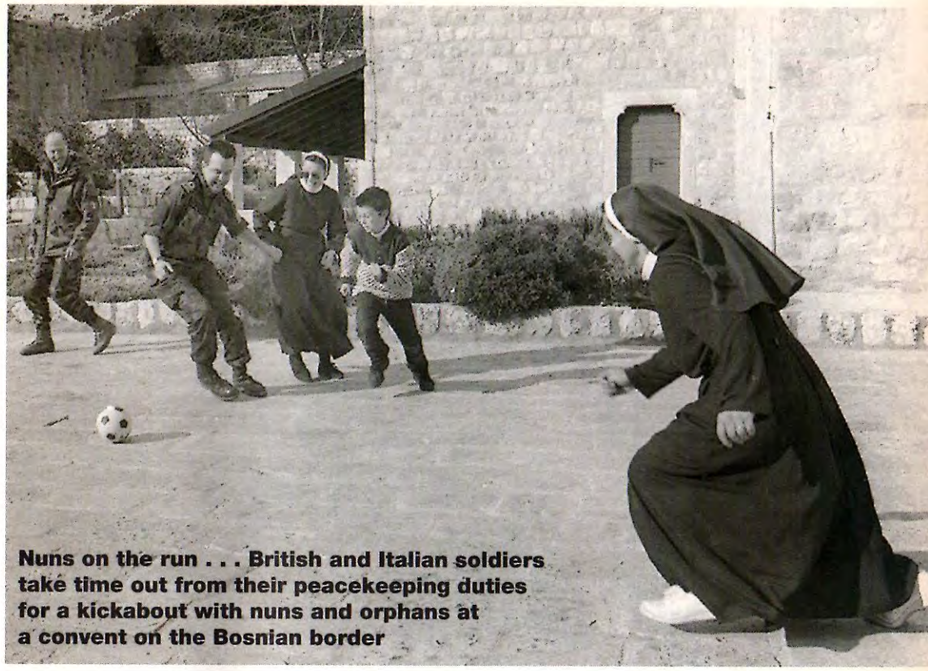
First-choice Vitor Baia is banned for two months, and his replacement Silvino busted a shoulder after two minutes of the defeat by Benfica. That leaves his replacement, Vitor Novoa, as the only choice, forcing Bobby Robson to take Salgueiros keeper Jorge Silva on loan. As if Porto did not have enough problems with their keepers, Novoa gave away a penalty in the Benfica match.

A few weeks earlier, Porto had conceded two penalties in the 6-3 victory against Sporting Braga at Das Antas. Nothing odd in that, you might think, except these were the first spot kicks awarded against the champions at home for *seven* seasons. And you thought Manchester United get all the breaks.

Alive and saving

Red faces all round in Verona, where authorities were forced to cancel plans to name a new stadium after Italy's 1938 World Cup-winning goalkeeper Aldo Olivieri when they discovered he is still alive.

"Thanks for the initiative, but I hope to live a while longer," said Olivieri, now 86, from his home in western Italy.



Nuns on the run . . . British and Italian soldiers take time out from their peacekeeping duties for a kickabout with nuns and orphans at a convent on the Bosnian border

A Franciscan monk, incensed at Juventus striker Alessandro Del Piero's swearing during the Champions League quarter-final second leg against Real Madrid, has launched a campaign against foul language in football.

"Del Piero should have been sent off. He swore repeatedly. Everybody saw and heard him. It's a scandal," said Father Sebastiano Bernardini.

Singing, not scoring

The Brazil team who won the South American Olympic qualifying tournament in Mar del Plata in Argentina prepared for their victory in the usual way, working hard on their shooting, passing, running . . . and singing.

Federation officials were concerned that players who did not sing the Brazilian national anthem before matches were giving the country a bad name. So this time they made sure players knew the words.

Officials also are worried that players will indulge in too much sex during this summer's tournament. So much so that the players will stay in university dormitory accommodation for the first round of games in Miami in a bid to stave off temptation to score.

"Sex in itself is not a problem," team supervisor Americo Faria said. "The problem occurs when there are abuses that lead to exhaustion."

Your country needs you

Are you Croatian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Czech, German, Swiss or Danish? If so, our sister publication *GOAL* needs you.

On June 1 in Sheffield, *GOAL* – in association with Teamtheme – are staging EUROFANS 96, a five-a-side tournament involving supporters of all the 16 competing nations at Euro 96.

The teams will represent their nation in a dress rehearsal for the real competition. Teams from England, France, Italy, Scotland, Russia, Turkey, Spain, Holland and Portugal have already entered, but *GOAL* are still looking for teams from the remaining countries competing at Euro 96.

For more details, call Paul Littlefair at Teamtheme on 01202-733323.

Badge Business

BOHEMIANS

Czech side Bohemians began life as AFK Vrsovice, but changed their name when they toured Australia in 1926 in a bid to become more closely identified with their homeland (Prague was then capital of Bohemia). They returned from that tour with two live kangaroos which they had somehow acquired in Brisbane. The nickname 'kangaroos' was soon adopted, and a club crest featuring a kangaroo soon followed.

WORLD SOCCER exclusive

Don't panic!

Holland and Chelsea veteran Ruud Gullit tells Gerry Cox that English football is not as bad as many think and that he's staying in England for another season

RUUD GULLIT will be taking part in this summer's European Championship Finals after all – but only as a television analyst.

He has extinguished lingering hopes that he might be tempted to come out of international retirement and don Holland's orange shirt again – and possibly lead them to a repeat of their 1988 victory.

"There's a time for coming and a time for going," he told me. "I've had my time with the national team, and there is no way back for me."

The decision comes despite the possibility that Gullit could re-create the highlight of his career, the Dutch victory in Germany eight years ago.

'England's recent performances have shown a lot of promise and Terry Venables obviously knows what he wants . . . You should give yourself more credit for the football you produce. You do yourselves down, and like to play as underdogs'

Gullit and Marco Van Basten inspired the Dutch to their first major international triumph – both scored in the 2-0 win over Russia in the Final – after years of frustration. The Dutch had suffered successive World Cup Final defeats in 1974 (against Germany in Germany) and 1978 (against Argentina in Argentina) before Gullit arrived on the scene.

"The Dutch always produced good sides but we hadn't managed to win a trophy – and that is very important, for the players, the fans and the country as a whole," says Gullit. However, he is not carried away by the fervour has surrounded the current Holland side ever since their demolition of the Republic of Ireland in the play-off at Anfield that ended the qualifying competition.

"It's difficult to say how we are going to do this time," he says. "Since that victory over the Irish many people are calling Holland the favourites, but nobody wants that particular tag.

"England, obviously, will be among the favourites because they are at home, and you can't ignore that advantage. But they will find it hard because of all the pressure brought about the expectations of their supporters.

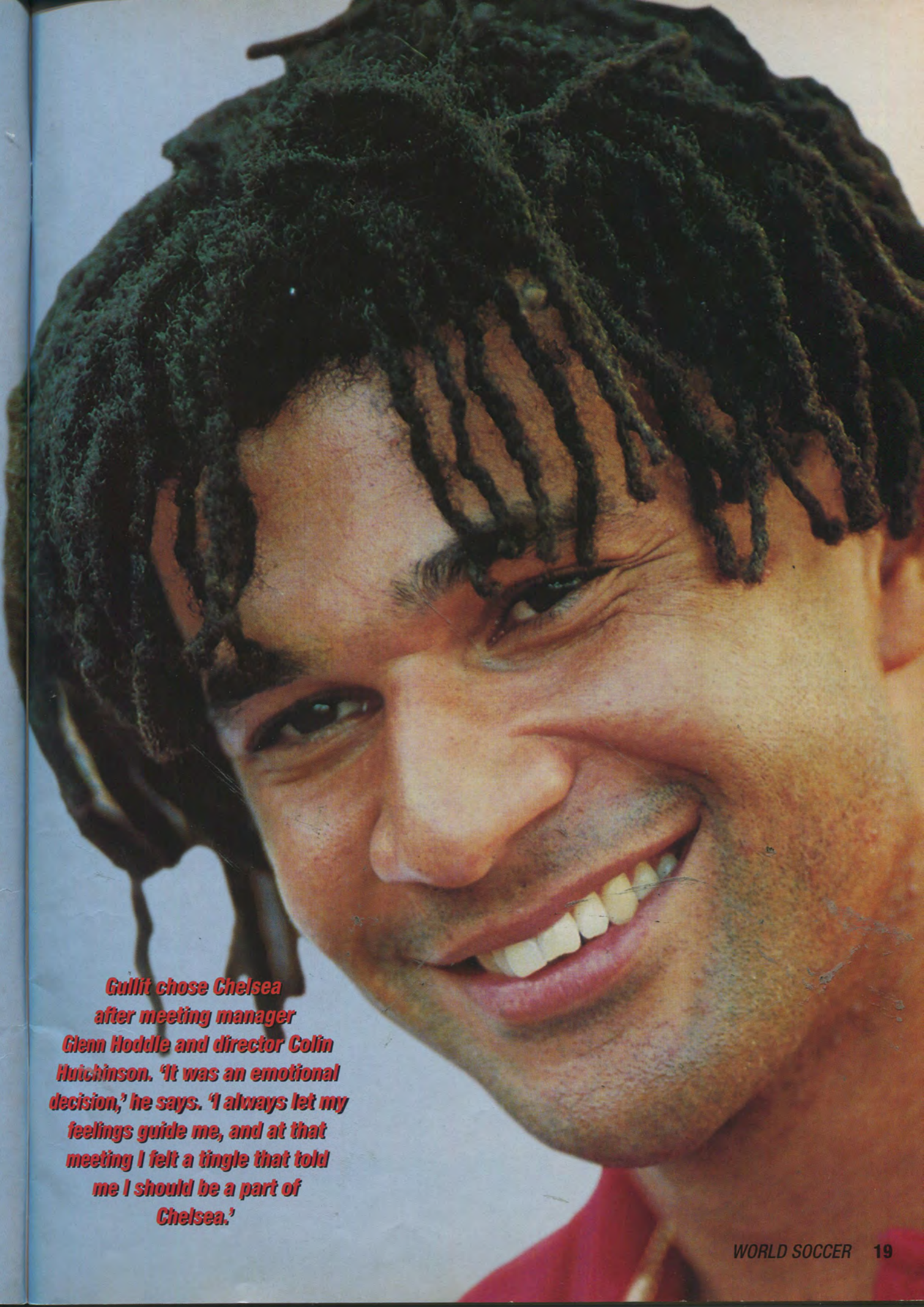
"Judging their form is difficult because they've played nothing but friendlies for the past two years. They have players with a lot of talent – Paul Gascoigne, for example – but nobody knows what will happen once the tournament starts.

"Some players do well for their club and not so well for their country. Alan Shearer is an example of that." Despite these reservations, Gullit believes England are on the way becoming a footballing force once again.

"England's recent performances have shown a lot of promise, and the coach, Terry Venables, obviously knows what he wants.

"You should give yourself more credit for the football you produce in England. You do yourselves down, and like to play as underdogs."

(Continued over)



Gullit chose Chelsea after meeting manager Glenn Hoddle and director Colin Hutchinson. 'It was an emotional decision,' he says. 'I always let my feelings guide me, and at that meeting I felt a tingle that told me I should be a part of Chelsea.'

WORLD SOCCER: Which countries – apart from Holland and England – do you expect to do well at Euro 96?
RUUD GULLIT: The Germans are really good tournament players. They're always there. But don't underestimate two of the smaller countries, Turkey and Croatia. They are good teams. Denmark won the tournament last time after getting in at the last minute, because of the trouble in Yugoslavia. They may not be so good this time.

What is your view of the performances by English clubs in Europe?
You must be concerned about poor results. Why do you have this big gap between the level of performance at home and in Europe? But imagine what it's now like in Italy, with Milan out of the UEFA Cup. All hell has broken out.

Should our clubs copy the way the Dutch play?
You can learn from every method, but it's no good copying one unless it's a method you are good at. You have to adapt tactically. In Europe one mistake over two games can be vital. One chance, one goal. That's the difference between a good side and one not so good – taking those chances when they come. You have to be aware that you can't afford any errors. During training as well as during games, you have to have total concentration. And that's very difficult.

What has playing in England been like for you?
I had won everything there was to win in Italy, so I needed a new challenge, but it was important for me to move to a club where they play football the way I like to play it. Glenn Hoddle's way of thinking about playing is like mine, and he has some very good ideas. The style of play here is different to that in Holland and Italy, with lots of speed. But teams like Manchester United and Liverpool don't always play the traditional English style. They want to keep the ball and build their moves. I have been impressed by the quality of players here. Every team Chelsea play has some really good players.

'I had won everything there was to win in Italy, so I needed a new challenge, but it was important for me to move to a club where they play football the way I like to play it'

How does the standard of the Premiership compare with the continent?
There are differences between national styles and you can't really compare the German League, say, with the Italian, or the Dutch. The competition in Holland is not very good, because there are only three good teams. In Italy, results are everything, even if the style of play can be boring. If the result is right, everyone is happy. There are no friendlies in Italy, just pride and ambition. In Italy, you see eight-year-olds standing before the ball when an opponent is taking a free-kick. In England the accent is more on excitement. Every competition has its charms, and every country has its own style – not necessarily a better one than any other one.

Is there anything that surprises you about the English game?
The game itself. I didn't know what to expect after Italy, but I was pleased to adapt so quickly. Things have gone better than I expected, but then I never expect too much. I just wanted to settle down and try to play my normal game. I really enjoy playing here. Sometimes in Italy you couldn't enjoy the game. Teams playing against Milan, for instance, get everyone back in defence and aim for 0-0. So they lean back, with their arse in goal, and try to hang on. It's hard work breaking that down. Some games were fun, but there were many that were really tough. Mind you, there is nothing wrong in winning 1-0, even if the crowd give you the slow handclap while you're doing it. And it would be pointless for a team like Piacenza to go to San Siro and play an attacking game. They

Ruud pics . . . Gullit in Holland's orange; for PSV Eindhoven (right) and Chelsea (far right)

'I like London. I had a wonderful feeling right from day one . . . I'll definitely be here next year. I signed a two-year contract, after all'

The quality of life is very important to Gullit. 'You might be able to kick a ball well, but if you're not happy then that's worthless'

From Haarlem to the Fulham Road

Ruud Gullit was born on September 1, 1962, in Amsterdam, son of a Dutch mother and a Surinamese father. He was playing for Haarlem at the age of 16, and was watched by Arsenal and Ipswich, but both passed up the chance to sign him. He gained further experience with Feyenoord and PSV Eindhoven before, in 1987, he moved to Milan for £5.5million, then the world's record fee. In the same year he was named both European and World Footballer of the Year.

Gullit enjoyed spectacular success with Milan, winning the Italian title in 1988, 1992 and 1993. He scored two goals in Milan's 4-0 demolition of Steaua Bucharest in the 1989 Champions Cup Final and Holland's first in the 1988 European Championship Final triumph. He later did 'an Italian shuffle' by going to Sampdoria, back to Milan and then to Sampdoria again, before joining Chelsea last summer. His career, often interrupted by injuries, seemed virtually over as far as top-class soccer was concerned, and Samp gave him a free transfer in recognition of his service. He chose Chelsea ahead of Monaco, Galatasaray in Turkey, or a club in Japan.

Even with a salary estimated at £20,000 a week, he has proved a marvellous bargain for Chelsea, enjoying a late flourish to almost two decades in the game, a period that has brought him virtually ever honour possible apart from an appearance in a World Cup Final.

SEASON BY SEASON

Season	Club	Apps	Goals
1979-80	Haarlem	24	4
1980-81	Haarlem	36	14
1981-82	Haarlem	31	14
1982-83	Feyenoord	33	8
1983-84	Feyenoord	33	15
1984-85	Feyenoord	19	7
1985-86	PSV Eindhoven	34	24
1986-87	PSV Eindhoven	34	22
1987-88	Milan	39	13
1988-89	Milan	28	11
1989-90	Milan	2	1
1990-91	Milan	31	2
1991-92	Milan	28	11
1992-93	Milan	15	7
1993-94	Sampdoria	31	15
1994-95	Milan	8	3
	Sampdoria	22	9
1995-96	Chelsea		
Internationals: Holland		65	16

would be hammered. The game in England is more open, which I enjoy. The Italian way helped me to become more professional and was very good for me, but being in England is good for me, too.

What disappoints you about the English game?
One thing – referees allowing tackles with studs up. In Europe you can't do that, it's dangerous play. I'm surprised that so much of it is allowed here.

What do you think of London?
I like it. I had a wonderful feeling here, right from day one. I don't go to clubs so much, but I go out with friends. I like to see the black community. There are not many black people in Italy and it's marvellous to be among mixed races again – a bit like the Leiseplein district of Amsterdam, where all sorts mix together. There is a lot to see in London, and you have a lot of freedom, although I'm not a typical tourist. I play a lot of golf. My family [wife and two daughters] like life here, too. We have adapted well. If you speak English, there is no problem.

Would you consider becoming a manager?
I would do, but first I just want to enjoy playing some more. I'll see.

Should Glenn Hoddle be the next England manager?
I don't know – it depends on what the Football Association wants. Glenn has great experience, but unfortunately he was born in England. He would have had 100 caps if he had played for another country. His time abroad is reflected in the training we do at Chelsea, and that's good for me.

What are your hopes for Chelsea?
I haven't set any targets. We need time, but I like the way we play. We're not cynical, trying to close the game down at 1-0. Glenn told me before I signed about the way he wanted to play, and that suited me. The most difficult thing in football is moving the ball on in one or two touches, but that's what we're trying to do under Glenn. Of course you can't change your style overnight. But if you keep possession, you dictate the game.

And the future?
Not sure. But I'll definitely be here next season. I signed a two-year contract, after all.

Education for excellence

IT'S THE morning after the night before but Louis Van Gaal is not hungover. He has spent the past two hours training with his youth team and has had little time to reflect on the senior side's 1-0 win over Borussia Dortmund in the Champions League quarter-final second leg.

Outside on the main training pitch at De Meer stadium Patrick Kluivert, Jari Litmanen and Marcio Santos are testing goalkeeper Edwin Van der Sar with some fierce shots. The rest of the first-team squad are training on the indoor pitch. It's business as usual at European and World champions Ajax Amsterdam.

After the presentation of the *WORLD SOCCER* 1995 Manager of the Year award, we sit in the Ajax trophy room, surrounded by symbols of the club's success. Four Champions Cups, two World Club Cups, the UEFA Cup, the Cup-winners Cup and numerous domestic titles. It would be easy for Van Gaal to bask in the glory of his club's glittering past. But he is happiest getting back to basics on the training pitch with his players.

"My relationship with my players drives me on," he says. "That's the most important thing. It's not the results. You have to have feedback from your players, to communicate with them. It's important that you trust each other."

It's a relationship that has proved spectacularly successful. Since Van Gaal took over from Leo Beenhakker in September 1991, Ajax have won a trophy every season, including, most notably, the Champions Cup in Vienna last May.

This year, after a jittery January when a 53-match unbeaten League run was ended by Willem Tilburg and Ajax crashed out of the Dutch Cup to Second Division Cambuur, the Amsterdammers have consolidated their domestic superiority, despite a challenge from PSV Eindhoven, and reached the semi-finals of the Champions League.

The 3-0 aggregate quarter-final win over Dortmund was achieved without eight first-choice players. In addition to long-term casualties Marc Overmars, Marcio Santos and Martijn Reuser, Danny Blind, Finidi George and Michael Reiziger all had hamstring injuries, while Patrick Kluivert was suspended and Peter Hoekstra, the wideman signed from PSV to replace Overmars, cup-tied.

"I was very pleased with last night," Van Gaal said. "We played with a very young team because of injuries against the German champions with many stars. We played a good tactical game. We defended in a small space because we knew that Borussia Dortmund are not so creative in a small space.

"Sammer and Moller, their creative players, were not playing and we knew that the long balls would be coming from Julio Cesar. That was easy to defend. We played the counter-attack very well."

With so many players missing, Van Gaal gave a first-team debut to another teenager. Danny Landzaat, a 19-year-old right-back who has been with Ajax since the age of eight, replaced Jari Litmanen towards the end of the game in Amsterdam's Olympic stadium.

"It was a reward for Jari, who had been out for six weeks and only had two training sessions under his belt, but it was also a reward for Danny's performances in the second team. It was only two minutes so it was easy for him.

Louis Van Gaal, Ajax coach and WORLD SOCCER Manager of the Year, talks exclusively to Gavin Hamilton

Trophy King . . . Louis Van Gaal receives the *WORLD SOCCER* Manager of the Year award in Amsterdam

"It gives me the most satisfaction to see a player coming through like that because we have educated him ourselves. It's the result for our youth education."

The Ajax youth system has been widely admired and often copied, but rarely bettered. The word Van Gaal uses again and again is education. It's an indication of the importance the club attaches to all aspects of their youngsters' development, right down to teaching parents the importance of diet. And it's a theme he warms to when asked about English football.

Van Gaal is, by his own admission, no fan of the English game and claims it will take 10 years to bring England up to the standard of Europe's best.

"It's difficult to compare Dutch and English football because in England there is no education of young players, only school competitions. You must first hold youth education outside of the schools and then maybe after 10 years things will improve.

"For the time being you have to play football in the English style and hope for the best. That's the best way to play in England. You cannot change a tradition that has been there for many years. But you can change the youth. It will take 10 years but you have to invest otherwise the gap between Europe and England will just get wider."

Words for Terry Venables to reflect on, although not everyone is as big a fan of the Ajax system as the England coach.

German national team manager Berti Vogts, having seen two German teams knocked out of Europe by Dutch sides, said: "Everybody in Germany says we should copy the Ajax model. If we do that we risk ending up on level two. You can't change the culture of a society and we, as soccer players, are part of German culture."

Van Gaal is confident that the Ajax youth programme will continue to throw up talented youngsters, but he is aware that there are limits and that, post-Bosman, the European transfer market may change dramatically.

"In the last four years, more than 20 players have left the club and we are still at the top," he says. "We are doing well, but sometimes there is a limit."

Milan have reportedly struck deals with midfielder Edgar Davids, left-back Michael Reiziger and forward Nwankwo Kanu that will take the three players to San Siro when their Ajax contracts run out at the end of the season.

"The Bosman judgement will affect Ajax because there are three contracts which finish at the end of the season: Davids, Kanu and Reiziger. But last year six players left the club. It's normal because we are in the spotlight and so everyone wants to buy our players. It's the same every year. So they go and we replace them."

Ajax have put Hoekstra, bought to replace Overmars who will be out injured for another six months, on a six-year contract. "That is normal now as a result of the Bosman case. You have to adapt to the new situation," Van Gaal says.

He also points out that Ajax should no longer be seen as a selling club. "We can also buy players now," he says. "When players are sold and our youth education cannot deliver the talent for the positions to be filled, say for Davids, Kanu and Reiziger, then I have to buy players.

"Within two weeks we will buy two or three players to replace the players who have left. Normally I buy older players because of their experience. When we educate the players ourselves, they have enough experience already because of their education."

Van Gaal was a respected player for Ajax, Antwerp, Telstar, Sparta and AZ'67 Alkmaar. However, he is far more respected as a coach and there are many outside of Holland who would leap at the chance of employing him.

"I am happy with Ajax but I do have an ambition to go abroad," he says. "I already have a contract signed for next season, but after that, maybe."

Would he consider England? His name has been mentioned for the position of FA technical director. "A job to change the youth education and to invest in youth, maybe, but not while the playing style is like it is," is his response.

Ajax players are likely to dominate the Dutch national side, who will start Euro 96 as one of the favourites. Not surprisingly, Van Gaal is tipping Holland to go all the way. "I think the Netherlands have a big chance," he says. "I wish England well, but they are in the Netherlands' group so it will be difficult for them." Any other tips? "Croatia and Portugal have good players. They suit me."

'In the last four years, more than 20 players have left the club and we are still at the top. We are doing well, but sometimes there is a limit'

The immediate future for Van Gaal and Ajax is the Champions League semi-final against Greek Champions Panathinaikos, a repeat of the 1971 Champions Cup Final at Wembley.

"I will go to watch them myself but my assistant Ton Pronk was there for the Legia Warsaw match and he has told me that they are a good team, especially the striker Warzycha and the midfielder Borelli.

"It's a big stadium and a big crowd. It will be difficult. It's always difficult when you are in the semi-finals."

The semi-final leg in Amsterdam will be one of the last games Ajax play at the Olympic stadium before they move to a new state-of-the-art stadium, complete with sliding roof, this summer.

The financial future of the club is assured after 65,000 fans applied for season tickets in the 50,000-seat arena. The danger is that the heart and soul of Ajax, affectionately known as Europe's smallest giant, will be lost forever.

"The most important aspect of the move will be to make sure that we keep the culture of the club friendly and open. It will be difficult, but we shall see."

French polish outshines Italian veneer

FRANCE scored a 2-0 victory over Italy in the European club quarter-finals to signal a remarkable international renaissance only three years after plumbing the depths of the Marseille match-fixing scandal.

Likeliest trophy-winners are Paris Saint Germain, who reached the semi-finals of the Cup-winners Cup, beating Parma 3-1 at the Parc des Princes. They joined champions Nantes and UEFA Cup giantkillers Bordeaux in the last four of the three European competitions, the first time France has had a team in each of the three semi-finals.

Paris coach Luis Fernandez said: "I don't know what to say, I'm so happy. We want to go all the way now. French football has progressed so much. Just look, with three sides still left in at the semi-final stage."

Certainly there will have to be a new name on the Cup-winners Cup after holders Zaragoza fell to domestic rivals La Coruna, coached by John Toshack and with Brazilian striker Bebeto apparently back in favour.

Fernandez praised Bordeaux in particular for the way in which they crowned their remarkable progress from last summer's much-maligned InterToto Cup by knocking Italian League leaders Milan – Maldini, Baresi and Co – out of the UEFA Cup by 3-2 on aggregate after a 3-0 second leg revival with two goals from Christophe Dugarry.

Fernandez said: "Bordeaux showed us the way. They are proof it is time to stop saying how hard it is to beat the Italians. I hope French football can do the grand slam now and really show we are up there on a level with Italy."

Nantes will have the chance to prove that in yet another Franco-Italian battle, as they now face Juventus in the Champions League semi-finals after beating weakened Moscow Spartak 4-2 on aggregate. Coach Jean-Claude Suaudeau is confident enough. He said: "We've been waiting seven months through the Champions League for a clash like this, against one of the real big fish – and we're not frightened of anybody."

By contrast, the quarter-final results made it Italy's worst season in Europe in recent memory. Only Juventus survived, recovering from a 1-0 defeat by Real Madrid in Spain to win deservedly by 2-0 in Turin.

Parma's failure against Paris Saint-Germain had critics talking about the end of an era for a club who won the trophy in 1993, were runners-up a year later, then won the UEFA Cup last season after beating Juve in an all-Italian final.

The UEFA Cup failures of both Milan and Roma – beaten on the away goals rule by Slavia Prague – means this is the first time since 1988 that no Italian team has qualified for the last four of the competition. Since then Italy has claimed the trophy in every year except 1992, when Torino lost in the final to Ajax.

The semi-finals this season offer a major glamour clash in the meeting of former European champions Barcelona and Bayern Munich. The other semi-final pits Bordeaux against Slavia Prague, with the Czech side at home in the first leg.

In the Cup-winners Cup Feyenoord, entering their sixth semi-final in European competition, meet the 1985 losing finalists Rapid Wien, who comprehensively outplayed Moscow Dynamo. Paris meet La Coruna.

The draw for home and away status in the pre-seeded Champions League sets holders Ajax Amsterdam at home to Panathinaikos in the first leg. Juventus, of course, play Nantes.

Paris passion . . . PSG players celebrate their victory over Parma

The semi-final draw

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
Juventus v Nantes
Ajax v Panathinaikos
Final – May 22, Rome

CUP-WINNERS CUP
Deportivo La Coruna v Paris Saint Germain
Feyenoord v Rapid Wien
Final – May 8, Brussels

UEFA CUP
Bayern Munich v Barcelona
Slavia Prague v Bordeaux
Final legs – May 1 & 15

Semi-final ties to be played on April 2, 3 and 4 (first leg) and April 16, 17 and 18 (second leg).

The Bosman challenge

Keir Radnedge meets European Commissioner Padraig Flynn in another exclusive for WORLD SOCCER

EUROPEAN football is confronted with a fabulous challenge not a fatal catastrophe by the historic European Court of Justice ruling in the case brought by Jean-Marc Bosman.

The terms of that challenge were spelt out by European Commissioner Padraig Flynn in an exclusive interview in his eighth-floor office, which has a commanding view over Brussels and a legal perspective further than the eye can see – from his native Ireland's Atlantic coast to beyond the arctic circle in Norway.

Like it or not, the Bosman judgement will not go away. UEFA and the rest of Western European football ignored the lengthening shadow for long enough. But that might as well be ancient history now. And Flynn made it clear he expects further revolutionary change in the not-too-distant future, when the entire Western European transfer fee system – not merely the out-of-contract cross-border market – is deemed illegal.

The Bosman verdict was not an end in itself, just the beginning. Holland and Belgium have already pre-empted being forcibly pushed down the road to a no-fee football marketplace. They are being sensible and taking the long view. Germany is considering it. England will resist as long as possible, but that may not be too long in the face of European Commission concern. The writing is on the wall. And when the next generation of Dutch and Belgian footballers run rings around England in the 2018 World Cup, remember . . . we told you why here, first.

The trouble is, the writing is on the wall, too, for the small nursery clubs, who live on the cash scraps of the transfer system. And their survival depends on the attitude of the men who control the strings of the fattest purses – the club presidents, chairmen and chief executives. Commissioner Flynn does not see why their altruistic motivation should be put in question. But then, the eighth floor of a European Commission tower block in Brussels is a long way from the football boardroom.

Flynn decries the popular perception that the European Commission is a hard-hearted ogre whose *raison d'être* is to grind the life out of anything which does not succumb to the demands of European jurisprudence.

"I and my colleagues at the Commission DO understand that the Bosman judgement has major implications for football," he said. "But we are also bound to ensure that the law is applied. There is scarcely any room for manoeuvre. The Court ruling is binding on us all."

Flynn held out no hope of the European Union's Intergovernmental Conference – the last resort for anti-Bosman reactionaries – creating an exclusion clause for professional sport to append to the Treaty of Rome, which governs the European Union. "Article 48, which deals with the freedom of movement of workers, is fundamental to the Treaty," he said. Thus, it's as easy to withdraw from the European Union as it is to vary the Treaty.

Flynn added: "There is nothing to stop a country's football authorities lobbying their own government to seek action. But the issue has not appeared on any agendas. My personal opinion is that the proposal would not get very far. After all, professional footballers are workers who are paid for what they do for a living. The trouble is, if you grant an exemption for one category of people, then another category want it."

If that sounds like a man imprisoned by his own logic, then that's not far from the truth. But the complaint from Gerd Aigner, UEFA's general secretary, that current events have been moulded by politicians with no understanding of sport is drawn too narrowly.

The present chaos arose because, initially, a footballer of limited ability but a burning sense of justice and injustice took his grievance to court. Only from there did it fall, ultimately, like a lead weight, into the European political arena.

The European Commission's reaction has been what one might describe as negative-passive. Flynn said that the EC appreciated UEFA and football's difficulties, "even though we were duty bound to take a tough line". The EC, he said, would do "all it could" to help football find solutions. But do not be misled. All he meant was that, if football brought proposals for a new way ahead, then he would advise them on whether they fell within European Union legal parameters.

In other words, do not expect any proposals or shafts of light from Brussels. The European Commission is not about answers, only questions.

If all this sounds gloomy, then it gets better – or worse – yet.

The Bosman case landed European football with two problems to solve. Complicating matters is the fact that they are each governed by a different Article of the Treaty of Rome and may thus be policed differently.

The transfer of players is governed by Article 48 (on freedom of movement of workers), while foreign player restrictions are governed by Article 85, which deals with competition. (Surely, the lawyers who drew up the Treaty were thinking of industrial rather than sporting competition but that argument cuts no ice.) In policing Article 48, the EC can act only against member states; but in policing Article 85, it can act through the courts against civil entities i.e. companies, institutions, etc.

Thus a refusal one day soon to scrap transfer fees might find the British government being sued in the courts but a refusal to bow to pressure on foreign player restrictions could have landed UEFA or a club or a national federation in court.

The Commission's concern with the letter of the law was perfectly illustrated when Flynn considered the correspondence with UEFA over implementation of the Bosman "law".

He said: "We sent a warning letter to UEFA in mid-January to emphasise the seriousness of the situation and seeking their response. UEFA, in due course, informed the EC that:
1) they accepted the ruling as it affected out-of-contract players moving across frontiers; and
2) they had dropped the nationality rule in UEFA club competitions. Most – though not all – of the national federations have also made us aware that they accept the rulings.

"We were pleased to receive that response. Later, we had a meeting here with David Will and Jean Fournet-Fayard from UEFA, with their lawyer, Alistair Bell. We had what I would describe as a full, frank and open exchange of views. They made a big play about the problems of changing rules in the middle of the season. But, as far as I can see, no-one is at a disadvantage. The rules which applied at the start of the season have changed in the same way, at the same time, for everyone, so no-one is penalised by comparison with anyone else."

And what about the gentleman's agreement by which the clubs will maintain three-plus-two to the end of the season? Flynn said: "I don't know anything about any gentleman's agreement. It's not a question of turning a blind eye. No-one has raised a complaint. Anyway, obviously, it's up to each club to select whichever players they decide to play in whatever match."

Flynn has no doubt that football is a business like any other and a business which, in his words, "has grown enormously in economic strength over the past 10 to 15 years".

Now the time has come for Western Europe to put that economic strength to properly directed use. He accepted that small clubs faced an uncertain financial future through the loss of transfer revenue, though "no-one has been able to show me any precise figures in support of that argument". Now is the time for the football industry to channel its new-found sponsorship and television income – like other industries – into its own youth training programmes.

"We want to be as helpful as we can," he said. "We have invited the federations to make suggestions as to how best they can share the game's economic resources."

That means – in English terms – the likes of Manchester United and Arsenal and the rest taking a reduced slice out of the next *Sky TV* deal and allowing a chunk of the cash to be spread out in grants among the small clubs in the Football League, the Vauxhall Conference and right on down the pyramid. Such a scheme is already being drawn up in Holland. Indeed, the new Dutch television deal was constructed with precisely this need in mind.

In the long term, it is clear clubs will be spared the need to find huge sums for transfer fees – because transfer fees will not exist, at least, not in Western Europe. Flynn has little doubt that, in due course, "the Court may well hold that the entire transfer fee system is not sustainable under the law".

So far, so good – or bad – depending on your point of view. Flynn had played a straight bat to all the issues, never deviating from his Commission brief and making sure that any odd "personal" observation which was seen to escape was only a logical extension of the situation post-Bosman. But what the major football authorities might find disturbing was his rejection of concerns over the effect ending foreign player restrictions would have on national teams.

Surely, wiping out foreigner controls would inevitably harm the national teams of the European Union countries? Flynn began to answer in terms of clubs representing their countries in European competitions. When halted, he offered the Irish national team as an example of how countries would benefit because players would no longer be restricted by nationality clauses on where they could earn their club living.

Silvio Berlusconi would have loved it; Gerd Aigner and Sepp Blatter would have had steam coming out of their ears.

But this is the future and football is going to have to grow up and live with it. As Flynn concluded: "What is wrong about football having to deal with reality? Isn't the football industry prepared to take responsibility for its own future? It's not as if they are short of cash. The associations, clubs and players – and not just the top 100 – all have a vested interest, do they not?"

Padraig Flynn

European Union
Austria
Belgium
Denmark
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Holland
Italy
Luxembourg
Portugal
Republic of Ireland
Spain
Sweden
UK

European Economic Area
Iceland
Liechtenstein
Norway

Other Western Europe
Switzerland

'What is wrong about football having to deal with reality? Isn't the football industry prepared to take responsibility for its own future? It's not as if they are short of cash. The associations, clubs and players – and not just the top 100 – all have a vested interest, do they not?'

Tough at the top

Keir Radnedge on the problems facing Bayern Munich in their latest quest for domestic and European honours

BAYERN MUNICH are Germany's greatest modern football club. But even they are not spared the occasional local difficulty.

That is why they have won the German League title only twice in the 1990s and why the team – though duelling with Borussia Dortmund at the top of the Bundesliga and comfortably through to face Barcelona in the semi-finals of the UEFA Cup – have lately been considered on the brink of crisis.

On the one side are the veterans, such as Lothar Matthaus and Jurgen Klinsmann; on the other are new stars of potential such as Mehmet Scholl and Christian Ziege. Then there are the expensive foreign imports such as Frenchman Jean-Pierre Papin, Bulgaria's Emil Kostadinov, Switzerland's Ciri Sforza and Austria's Andy Herzog.

The challenge undertaken since last summer by master coach Otto Rehhagel is to build a new team while simultaneously keeping Bayern in the hunt for the various major titles.

Part of Rehhagel's job is to redefine Bayern's tactics following the unsuccessful gamble last season on Italian coach Giovanni Trapattoni.

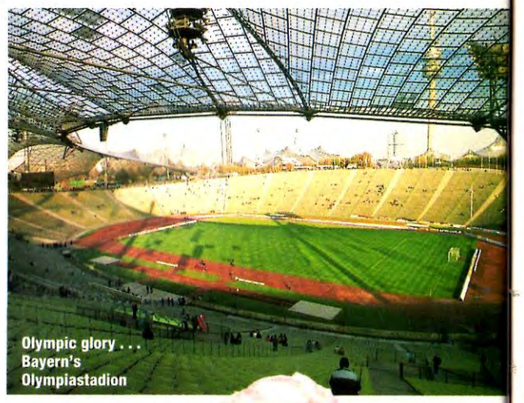
Club president Franz Beckenbauer, vice-president Karl-Heinz Rummenigge and general manager Uli Hoeness – all three outstanding former internationals – have overseen heavy expenditure over the past year. Top acquisition was Germany's captain and star striker Klinsmann.

Bayern led the League early on last autumn but then allowed Dortmund to overtake them. Bayern lost their first two games in mid-February after the resumption of the season following the winter break. Finally they returned to winning form by thrashing Uerdingen 6-1 away when Dortmund, conveniently, lost 2-1 at home to Rostock.

It may have been coincidence, but Bayern's return to form followed an outspoken warning from Matthaus, who said: "We have to be as hard as nails on ourselves. Too many people here have put their personal demands first and performance second. It has to be the other way round."

Bayern have been Germany's champions on a record 13 occasions; on eight occasions they have won the cup. A glittering array of prizes includes the World Club Cup (in 1976), three Champions Cups (in 1974, 1975 and 1976) and the Cup-winners Cup (in 1967).

It is that history, plus the return to the club of former great players such as Beckenbauer, Gerd Muller (now a coaching assistant) and Rummenigge, which has fed the fans' expectations of a revival.



Olympic glory . . . Bayern's Olympiastadion

Goal getter . . . Klinsmann (centre)

TEAM FOCUS: BAYERN MUNICH

THE COACH

Otto REHHAGEL (9.8.38)
A pioneering professional in the early years of the Bundesliga in the early 1960s, Rehhagel played for Rot-Weiss Essen, Hertha Berlin and Kaiserslautern before turning to coaching with Saarbrucken. His originally outspoken style of management mellowed during successive appointments with Kickers Offenbach, Werder Bremen (saving them from relegation in 1976), Borussia Dortmund, Arminia Bielefeld and Fortuna Dusseldorf. Rehhagel returned to Bremen in April 1981 when coach Otto Knefler was hurt in a car crash. His stint in charge included two League titles, two German cups and the European Cup-winners Cup. Bremen were also League runners-up on four occasions, promoting the nickname Otto the Second. He is no lover of the star system and has sometimes appeared to go out of his way to substitute or drop 'big names' such as Papin and Klinsmann.

THE SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS

Oliver KAHN (15.6.69)
Joined Bayern for a German record for a goalkeeper of £1.4million from Karlsruhe in the summer of 1994. Germany's No 3 goalkeeper at the 1994 World Cup finals but a serious knee injury upset his first season with Bayern. Capped twice and now back in the national squad.

Sven SCHEUER (19.1.71)
Promoted six years ago to the first-team squad after joining Bayern from Stuttgart amateur club, SV Boblingen.

DEFENDERS

Markus BABBEL (8.9.72)
Established himself last season with Bayern and the national team (11 caps). Started with Bayern, but joined Hamburg in 1992. Did so well that Bayern had to pay £900,000 to bring him 'home' last summer.

Samuel KUFFOUR (3.9.76)
Joined Bayern in 1994 from Italy's Torino, who 'cradle-snatched' him from Africa. Ten caps for Ghana and made his name with their World Youth Cup-winning sides.

Dieter FREY (31.10.72)
Signed three years ago from Augsburg but has spent most of his seasons with Bayern on the subs' bench.

Thomas HELMER (21.4.65)
Can play full-back, stopper or sweeper. Made his name originally with Arminia Bielefeld then Borussia Dortmund and was the subject of a transfer battle on the eve of the Euro 92 finals. He demanded a transfer in mid-contract, Dortmund refused to sell him to another German club but agreed a sale to Auxerre of France . . . who sold him straight on to Bayern. An established member of the national side with 42 caps (two goals).

Oliver KREUZER (12.11.65)
Big-money signing from Karlsruhe in 1991 whose time at Bayern has been spoiled by injuries and competition for places. Began with home-town club, SpVgg Ketsch.

Lothar MATTHAUS (21.3.61)
Germany's record international (122 caps, 22 goals) and Bayern captain. Captain also of the West German side who won the World Cup in Italy in 1990, though a niggling injury meant Andy Brehme took the decisive penalty which beat Argentina. Played with enormous success for Borussia Monchengladbach, Bayern (first time round) and Internazionale of Italy before returning to Bayern three years ago. Inter released him while he was still recovering from the career-threatening knee injury which had forced him out of the Euro 92 finals. An achilles injury then kept him out for much of 1995. Has converted to sweeper with mixed success.

Christian ZIEGE (1.2.72)
One of Bayern's most outstanding discoveries who joined from Hertha Zehlendorf in 1990. Originally a goalkeeper, he has converted with great success to an attacking left-back role in which he has emerged as Andy Brehme's successor for both club and country. Eleven caps (one goal) for Germany.

MIDFIELDERS

Dieter HAMANN (27.8.73)
Local boy, another amateur, and signed from minor neighbours Wacker Munich as a 16-year-old.

Andreas 'Andy' HERZOG (10.9.68)
The current top Austrian player who began his career with Admira Wacker of Vienna, before a move to neighbours Rapid. He starred at the 1990 World Cup finals and moved to Werder Bremen in 1992. Herzog was once nicknamed the "White Gullit" by then manager Hans Krankl. Fifty caps for Austria.

Christian NERLINGER (21.3.70)
Joined as a 14-year-old from minor club TSV Forstenried and has scored key goals in League and Europe.

Mehmet SCHOLL (16.10.70)
Born of Turkish parents, he started with Karlsruhe. Several Turkish clubs were interested but Bayern finally signed him in the summer of 1992. Outstanding 'touch' player who has been the subject of speculation that Beckenbauer wants him in the team rather than Rehhagel's favourite, Herzog. Four caps for Germany.

Ciriaco 'Ciri' SFORZA (2.3.70)
Strong yet skilled midfield pivot with a powerful shot which, critics say, he does not use enough. Made his name with Grasshopper then moved to Germany with Kaiserslautern and on to Bayern last summer. It is no secret that his former Switzerland manager, Roy Hodgson, would like him at Inter. Capped for Switzerland 44 times (four goals).

Thomas STRUNZ (25.4.68)
Bought from home-town club MSV Duisburg at 20 but he was a bit-part player and moved to Stuttgart, where he started to fulfil his potential. Secured a place in the German national squad and Bayern had to pay £1m – more than twice what they had received – to buy him back last summer. Twenty-five caps (one goal).

FORWARDS

Jurgen KLINSMANN (30.7.64)
Current national captain in the absence of Matthaus, he exploded on German football in 1986-87. With VfB Stuttgart he earned international recognition for the first time in a 1-1 draw against Brazil in December 1987 and led Stuttgart to the 1989 UEFA Cup Final. He moved to Italy with Internazionale in 1990 and helped Germany to World Cup success – playing perhaps the game of his life in Germany's 2-1 second round win over Holland in Milan. Left Inter for Monaco in 1992, transferring to Tottenham for one memorable season before being lured home by Bayern. Has scored 34 goals in 79 internationals and 14 goals already in the UEFA Cup this season but only seven in the League.

Emil KOSTADINOV (12.8.67)
Began with CSKA Sofia, transferred to FC Porto of Portugal early in 1991 then moved on to La Coruna in Spain in the summer of 1993. Joined Bayern early last year. Forty-seven caps (14 goals) for Bulgaria and was one of the stars of the Bulgarian side who finished fourth at the 1994 World Cup finals.

Jean-Pierre PAPIN (5.11.63)
The last four years have been a major disappointment – a spell at Milan spoiled by foreign player restrictions and his time with Bayern wrecked by knee trouble. Began with Valenciennes and played in Belgium for Brugge before returning to France with Marseille. He was top league marksman four seasons in a row and voted European Footballer of the Year in 1991. Thirty goals in 54 internationals for France.

Marcel WITECZEK (18.10.68)
Former youth international who has never quite fulfilled expectations. Began as a pro with Rot-Weiss Oberhausen, then starred with Uerdingen and Kaiserslautern. Bayern bought him in 1993 to replace Roland Wohlfarth. Fifty goals in 250 League matches.

Alexander ZICKLER (28.2.74)
Signed from former East German champions Dynamo Dresden, whose cash crisis forced them to sell their most outstanding young talent three years ago.

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ITALY

Bosman's holiday!

Paddy Agnew on why Italian players used their new, Bosman-inspired powers to take a break from the game

THESE have been stirring, post-Bosman times in Italian football. Player power struck with an historic vengeance on Sunday March 17, when Italy experienced a players' strike, with the result that the day's Serie A programme was wiped out.

The strike dominated what was already a significant Italian football month, one which witnessed the temporary fall and doubtless not-so-temporary rise of Milan, not to mention Italy's worst performance in European club competition in eight years and a television rights war which priced Italian soccer at approximately £160million a year.

Inevitably, though, nothing created as much media fuss as the strike. Players union president Sergio Campana finally called the Italian Federation and League's bluff when he and his executive (including Gianluca Vialli of Juventus and Demetrio Albertini of Milan, among others) went all the way and held Italy's first ever soccer strike, after more than 20 previous occasions when such action was threatened only to be withdrawn at the last moment.

Even if the strike was inevitably dubbed the 'millionaires' picket', Italy's Serie A elite, including Vialli, argued that they were in fact striking on behalf of their less well-off brethren – 80 per cent of players in the lower divisions earn £10,000-13,000 per annum and 260 have earned nothing at all over the past three seasons because their clubs have gone into liquidation.

In theory, too, the players have four 'grievances': 1) They want a say in the running of Italian football; 2) They claim that more than £5million is owed to their pension fund; 3) They want the immediate abolition of transfer fees, in line with the Bosman judgement; and 4) They want a limitation on non-European Union foreigners.

In practice, though, the strike was a post-Bosman exercise in player power. Even if the expression of solidarity for less well-off colleagues is to be applauded, there is no doubting that the players' number one demand is for a larger say in the administration of their profession. In simple terms, the players' association (AIC) want 30 per cent of votes at Federal Council for themselves and nine per cent for the coaches, a percentage similar to that which now applies in Spanish football. At the moment, neither players nor coaches have any say on the Federal Council.

This story will clearly run and run. One thing is certain, however. The Italian football authorities (like those of many other countries) are slowly waking up to a brave, new world. Initially, they refused to listen to the players' request. Then, Federation president Antonio Matarrese tried to laugh off the threatened strike action by dubbing Vialli a "Robin Hood".

In the end, no doubt worried by the estimated £26million of lost football pools revenue, the Federation and League went a long way down the road to meeting the players' demands. By that stage, however, it was too late. The players had to make their post-Bosman point.

Critics argued that the strike would alienate fans. The fact that more than 150,000 Italian fans splashed out £3.2million in gate receipts for two European competition ties (AS Roma v Slavia Prague and Juventus v Real Madrid) just two days after the strike would suggest otherwise.

Those bumper box-offices and the 2-0 Juventus win over Real Madrid in the Champions Cup, however, were about the only optimistic note in Italy's worst European week in eight years. Milan and Roma in the UEFA Cup and Parma in the Cup-winners Cup all went out, leaving Italy with only one club, Juventus, among the 12 European semi-finalists.

You have to go back to the 1987-88 season to find a similarly disappointing result, when Atalanta were the only Italian side through to the semi-finals. In the seven seasons since then, however, there have been four years when three Italian clubs made it to the semi-finals and three years when no less than four made it.

Undoubtedly, the biggest shock was caused by Milan's 3-0 UEFA drubbing by Bordeaux. Having won the first leg 2-0 at the San Siro, Milan seemed well on the way to the semi-final. Italy coach Arrigo Sacchi summed up Milan's disaster, commenting: "Anyone would have said that it was an easy return leg, especially for Milan. The problem is that the Milan players must have thought so, too."

There were no excuses for Milan and when a jubilant Michel Platini appeared on television after the game to say that the win was not the fault of a poor Milan performance but rather thanks to a remarkable Bordeaux performance, it was impossible not to agree.

There were some excuses, however, for the performance of AS Roma, eliminated despite a 3-1 home win against Slavia Prague, when the solid but hardly outstanding visitors scored their decisive away goal in the 114th minute. However, Roma are no great shakes this season and their elimination only served to underline the point.

Parma's elimination from the Cup-winners Cup, thanks to a 3-1 defeat by Paris Saint Germain two nights later, was rather more predictable.

Rumours about the end of the Parma road for coach Nevio Scala, an injury to Gianfranco Zola (he missed the game), the ill-timed sale of Faustino Asprilla to Newcastle United and the half-hearted attempt to integrate Bulgarian Hristo Stoichkov have all combined to ruin Parma's season.

Three days later, that ruin became complete when Parma were trounced 3-0 by a Milan side missing Liberian George Weah, Croat Zvonimir Boban, Marco Simone, Alessandro Costacurta, Massimo Ambrosini and Stefano Eranio. For Milan, it was the rise from the temporary ashes and a win which surely put them on the road to title success, given that on the same afternoon Juventus ended Fiorentina's 16-match unbeaten run and moved above them to second.

As Sampdoria coach Sven-Goran Eriksson commented: "With all the class players that Milan have and with an eight-point lead, they won't lose the title now."

For Scala, it was a sad moment: "I suppose it's right that we've come to the end of my cycle, it's just that it has happened in the wrong manner."

Chiesa's chance

SAMPDORIA striker Enrico Chiesa appears to be making a perfectly-timed late run into the Italy squad for Euro 96.

He has been regularly among the goals for his club this season, and was summoned by national coach Arrigo Sacchi for a recent squad get-together. Now he has a reasonable chance of featuring in his country's 22-man European Championship party.

Of course, Gianfranco Zola and Fabrizio Ravanelli must have first option on a place. But like Lazio's Beppe Signori and Marco Simone of Milan, Chiesa would make an ideal back-up attacker for the expedition to England.

"Naturally I am interested in a forward who is one of Italy's leading scorers of the moment," said Sacchi. "Chiesa has been performing exceptionally well lately and deserves his opportunity to work with the national squad.

"I am not ruling him out of a place in my squad for Euro 96. Nor am I announcing he will definitely go with us. I want a closer look at him, to see how he shapes up with us. All I will add is that if Enrico continues on his good run of form, he has a chance of selection."

If Chiesa does make it to Euro 96, he will not be the first Italian striker to force his way into the national reckoning on the eve of a major tournament. Paolo Rossi had only two caps to his name before starring at the 1978 World Cup finals, while Italia 90 hero Toto Schillaci made his debut in his country's final warm-up game. Could Chiesa produce a similarly spectacular last-minute international breakthrough?

International prospect . . . Samp's Enrico Chiesa

He is not the sort of character to indulge in daydreaming, and is content to play down his prospects. "I was thrilled and surprised to receive the call from Arrigo Sacchi," he says. "It was fantastic news. But I don't want to get ahead of myself.

"I think my career is moving in the right direction, but I'm not yet an international player. I still have a lot to prove before I have the honour of representing Italy."

The current Serie A campaign has turned out to be a vintage season for Chiesa. After loan spells at Cremonese and Modena – for whom he managed 14 goals in each of the previous two seasons – he was recalled by parent club Sampdoria last summer and quickly proved a hit with the fans thanks to his mobility, technique and marksmanship. His 14 goals by mid-March included an outstanding double in the 2-0 home win over Juventus and a hat-trick in a 3-1 victory against Padova.

Indeed, that impressive total might have been even greater if he had not missed half a dozen games early in the season because of a variety of muscular problems.

"I believe Chiesa has as much talent as Del Piero," says Sampdoria skipper Roberto Mancini. "He's determined, very quick, skilful and an excellent taker of chances. He gets into some great positions in the box and shoots on sight. I think he has a future as an international player."

NICK BIDWELL

Player Profile

Aiming high

Gabriel Batistuta continues to set the highest standards

A RECENT opinion poll taken among Florentines suggested that if the city's best-known foreigner, Argentinian striker Gabriel Batistuta, were to present himself for election as City Mayor, he would win easily. We can believe it.

Just at the moment, if his name were put into the hat during a papal conclave in the Sistine Chapel, he probably would end up as the first Argentinian Pope. In what has been thus far an '*annus mirabilis*' for Fiorentina, Batistuta has been the guiding light, the inspiration and, above all, the leading goalscorer.

At 27 years of age, the man from Reconquista has never been playing better, despite a persistent ankle problem. If Fiorentina have spent most of the season as the side sitting closest on Milan's tail, then much of the credit has to go to Batistuta, whose 16 goals by mid-March keeps him well on course for his seasonal average in the Italian League over the past four years of 17.75.

'I'm a believer and my faith has always helped me'

The Batistuta public image is that of the decent guy who gets going when the going gets tough. His off-the-field personality is more complex, more unexpected.

When Italian sports magazine *Guerin Sportivo* recently asked him what he would do as mayor of Florence, his reply was surprising: "I'd declare war on drugs and drug pushers and I'd try to do something for children so that they might grow up more healthy and better behaved in a better society, one without violence. I care about this sort of thing because I have a four-year-old daughter myself."

More recently, during Italy's first players' strike, Batistuta not only expressed his wholehearted approval but went on to outdo the union executive with a radical proposal that none of them would have dared suggest: "We shouldn't restage this fixture list at a later date. When you strike, you decline to work . . . Some of the comments flying about make me want to weep. I can accept criticism from a worker, from someone who works 10 hours a day, but not from people who merely by talking about soccer on TV earn more than 75 per cent of what players earn."

Gabriel Omar Batistuta clearly is not a man to be underestimated. Argentinian colleagues describe him as an intelligent, thoughtful player far from the 'Fast Cars-Fast Money' cliché of the Italy-based football superstar.

He is not the sort of player likely to throw his [£1.3 million] annual salary down the drain. Rather than buy a fleet of expensive cars or jewellery, he has preferred to invest his money in Batistuta & Batistuta, an 18,000-hectare cattle farm, 100km west of his native Reconquista, which is owned in partnership with his father, Omar.

A fundamentally serious aspect of Batistuta emerged for all Italy to see when he was recently received by Pope John Paul II in a Vatican audience also attended by his compatriots Abel Balbo (AS Roma) and Jose Chamot (Lazio), as well as Uruguayan Daniel Fonseca (AS Roma).

"It was a unique and unforgettable experience and one that you cannot possibly describe. I'm a believer and my faith has always helped me," he commented.

Given George Weah's open acknowledgement of his belief in God [Allah, in his case] and Roberto Baggio's long-time conversion to religion [Buddhism, in his case], perhaps transcendental belief is the only valid support system for a football superstar.

In this second consecutive season of grace – remember, last year Batistuta ended up leading scorer with 26 goals – much analysis has been devoted to his remarkable skills. There was a time when he was seen as a powerhouse merchant, a striker who always intends to put the ball into the next *provincia* when he shoots at goal.

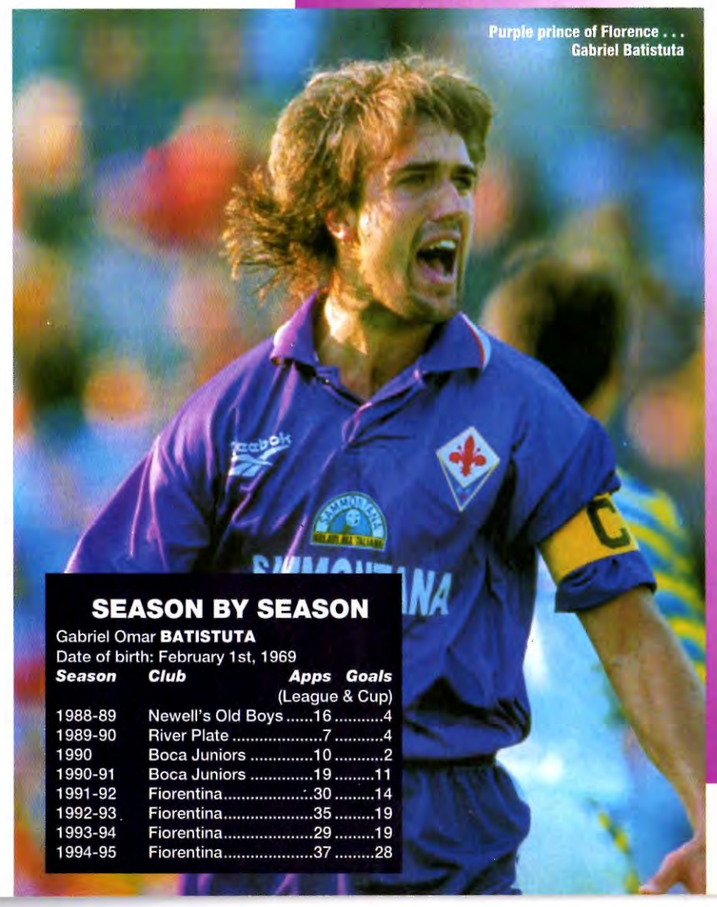
Breathtakingly delicate goals against Internazionale in both legs of the Italian Cup semi-final [Fiorentina won 3-1 and 1-0] probably settled that argument for ever.

Batistuta, it is true, has an explosively powerful and unstoppable shot. His current confidence and maturity, though, make him a player capable of striking a delicate free-kick or chipping delicately over an advancing goalkeeper. (For further information on this latter aspect of the Batistuta skills manual, consult Internazionale goalkeeper Gianluca Pagliuca).

Talk of Batistuta's prodigious technique prompts a wry smile from his father. Omar used to tease journalists by telling them how he had to "work real hard" on young Gabriel to get him to understand footballing basics. Or he would talk about how he made the young Batistuta play soccer with a medicine ball in order to develop his leg strength. "Those statements were all inventions. Gabriel did everything himself, on his own, and in his case you have to talk of natural talent," says his father

Where does Batistuta go now ? He has a ready-made answer – an Italian title with Fiorentina and a World Cup Final with Argentina. Sharpshooters of the Batistuta class have to aim high.

PADDY AGNEW



Purple prince of Florence . . . Gabriel Batistuta

SEASON BY SEASON

Gabriel Omar **BATISTUTA**

Date of birth: February 1st, 1969

Season	Club	Apps	Goals
		(League & Cup)	
1988-89	Newell's Old Boys	16	4
1989-90	River Plate	7	4
1990	Boca Juniors	10	2
1990-91	Boca Juniors	19	11
1991-92	Fiorentina	30	14
1992-93	Fiorentina	35	19
1993-94	Fiorentina	29	19
1994-95	Fiorentina	37	28

SPAIN

Mijatovic's millions

Graham Turner questions whether Real's new target, Pedja Mijatovic, is really worth his hefty price tag

Wanted man . . . Valencia's Predag Mijatovic

A PURCHASE price of £7million and a salary of £1.6m per year over the next five seasons. Plus a monthly living allowance and the odd win bonus. Not bad if you can get it, and it looks as though Predrag 'Pedja' Mijatovic is going to get it at Real Madrid as from July 1.

Until then he's under contract to Valencia, whose president, Francisco Roig, has been yelling until he's blue in the face about Real's highwayman tactics. However, £7m is the sum stipulated by the release clause in Pedja's contract and if Real lodge a guarantee for that amount in the federation offices at the end of the season it'll be a case of 'with one bond he was free'.

The move raises two burning questions. Where the blazes are cash-strapped Real digging up their pesetas? And who the blazes is Mijatovic to warrant such a gargantuan investment?

The latter is far easier to answer so, as the politicians say, let's start with the second question.

Mijatovic is one sizeable, tasty chunk of footballer whose international projection has been hindered by the ban on Yugoslavia. One could argue that fellow Montenegrin Dejan Savicevic has been similarly affected, but while he has been at high-profile Milan, Pedja's light has been hidden under Valencian bushels.

However, any Spanish aficionado will vouch for Pedja's talent. When Real's new president, Lorenzo Sanz, asked his squad to name the most effective player in the Spanish league, Mijatovic was the answer.

Their word was Sanz's command.

Pedja is a cross between Savicevic and Roberto Baggio. Seemingly lightweight, small and fragile but surprisingly resilient against Flintstone tactics, he moves fast and thinks even faster; his control evokes cliches about ball and bootlaces; he performs best when allowed to lurk behind two front-runners. And he scores goals. Lots of them. At the time of writing he was level with Tenerife's Juan Antonio Pizzi at the top of the scoring charts with 21 League goals.

Fans whose memory pre-dates the Yugoslav conflict might not be surprised by the £7m price-tag. Pedja, born in the Montenegrin capital of Podgorica (when it was still named Titograd) on January 19, 1969, was a member, along with Robert Prosinecki, Davor Suker, Robert Jarni and Zvonimir Boban, of the Yugoslav side which won the 1987 World Youth Championship in Chile.

Yet while Red Star went on to cover themselves in a forestful of laurels, Pedja had the 'misfortune' to be on the wrong side of the street with Partizan. They had paid a record fee of £400,000 to take him from Buducnost in 1989, impressed not so much by his scoring record as his creative skills.

Valencia were alerted by Prosinecki and an epic trip to Belgrade by their chief scout Bernardino Perez 'Pasieguito' produced such a glowing report that the board agreed to fork out £1.5m in one of those operations which was scrutinised by the government for alleged breach of the boycott on Serbia.

The Valencia fans questioned the investment in a player whose international career had been put on hold after 10 caps. Until they saw him play. He has been the undisputed idol ever since.

Valencia's current manager, Luis Aragones, is gutted to lose him. "Mijatovic is just brilliant. Brilliant. And he is going to get better."

Real hope Luis is right. Their idea is to team him up again with Davor Suker in a unique Serbo-Croat attack, with wonderboy Raul thrown in for good measure. Emerging from the spaces behind those two, Pedja could wreak havoc. He could do the same to Ivan Zamorano and Michael Laudrup, whose futures at Real are far from certain after the new acquisitions.

Barcelona, alarmed at the news of the signing, made a last-ditch attempt to gazump, using – once again – Prosinecki to try to persuade Pedja and his wife Helena that the Catalan capital would be a nicer place to bring up their children than landlocked Madrid. However, club president Josep Lluis Nunez, admitted: "If I were to pay the sort of money Madrid are prepared to pay, I would lead the club into bankruptcy."

Which brings us back to Question One. Lorenzo Sanz, who has shown signs of righting Real's economic wrongs, has negotiated a lease-back operation similar to that used by Barcelona for the signing of Ronald Koeman. "My brief as president," he claims, "is to build a great team, and that is what I am determined to do."

Sanz's brave decision to convert Mijatovic into one of the world's most expensive footballers raised even more eyebrows, coming as it did in the same week as a tax demand for £15m. The consolation for the Bernabeu board was that the bill presented to Barcelona was for £24,843,243 and 23 pence.

Explaining in 25 words the stance adopted by the tax inspectors from Hacienda would be tantamount to converting *War and Peace* into a sonnet. A rough precis would have to start by explaining that Spanish clubs divide players' earnings into two segments. One portion is the 'playing contract' lodged with the federation. The rest is paid into limited companies in exchange for 'rights to use the player's image'.

Tax-wise, the difference is enormous. PAYE deductions would be at the top rate of 56 per cent, but the ruse of paying part into a limited company saves the player some 22 per cent. Hacienda insist that the dual-contract system is a tax fraud and are claiming the entire shortfall on PAYE deductions over the past five years, plus interest.

Barcelona and Real Madrid, the clubs singled out – or maybe doubled out – for punishment have, for once, agreed to co-operate in defending their payment systems, in the Supreme Court if necessary. If the conflict goes that far down Spain's tortuous legal roads, judgment day is not likely to arrive until sometime early in the 21st century.

By that time, many of the contracts now being signed by TV companies and top clubs will be fully operational. As *WORLD SOCCER* reported last month, the big boys have been taking safety catches off their weaponry and threatening rebellion against the current contract signed by the Football League on behalf of all the First Division clubs.

This has sparked a major stampede, with TV companies sprinting into club offices with massive offers and densely worded pre-contracts. There is £250m already on the table, waiting for the League contract to expire in 1998.

Talking of stampedes, the Bosman ruling has generated protests in Spain. Real's recruitment of Suker and Mijatovic is symptomatic of the situation now created where end-of-contract stars become targets for volleys of offers during the months before the end of their agreements. Sevilla complain: "How can we ask Suker to risk a leg now that his move to Real has been formalised?" The free market has become a free-for-all.

The whiff of chaos has been accentuated by the Betis case. The club had the Benito Villamarin stadium closed for one game following the disturbances at the end of the Copa del Rey defeat by Atletico Madrid. A series of appeals gained a stay of execution, allowing Betis, in effect, to choose the weekend which would do them least economic damage. Predictably, they plumped for the home game against lowly Salamanca as the ideal Sunday to serve their penance and, backed by a referendum among the *socios*, they chose the Rosaleda stadium in Malaga as their place of exile.

They sold tickets and arranged fleets of buses and trains 48 hours before the game. Meanwhile, the Civil Governor of Malaga announced that the match could not go ahead because the stadium did not have turnstiles and thereby failed to comply with the most honourable regulations of the most honourable Council for Sport.

Solution? Betis were allowed to play the game at the Benito Villamarin. They won 4-0.

IF YOU ask managers in the Spanish League to name the fixture they most dread, it probably won't be Barcelona or Real Madrid away, but Rayo Vallecano at home!

At the time of writing, Madrid's third club had won only three away games all season. Yet losing at home to Rayo is considered so humiliating that each victory has led to the departure of the home team's manager.

First, Jorge Valdano went after Real Madrid lost 2-1 at the Bernabeu. Then Jose Manuel Lillo was on his way following Salamanca's defeat by the same score. Finally, Benito Floro resigned from the Albacete bench, having become the third victim of the old 1-2.

Portugal

Havelange helps to end the wrangle

FIFA PRESIDENT Joao Havelange stepped in to help end the long-running wrangle between Benfica and Sporting Lisbon.

He acted to avoid a court case that would have been costly on at least two fronts – in terms of cash and bad publicity for both clubs and the game in general.

The dispute goes back three years, to the time when Benfica sold Paulo Sousa (now with Juventus) and Pacheco (now with Belenenses) to Sporting, and claimed that a combined fee of £5m had been agreed.

Sporting alleged that both players had come to the end of their contracts, and were free agents.

As time dragged on, the row became more and more bitter. Benfica, not surprisingly, wanted what they thought was due to them: Sporting admitted that they did not have the money, and tried various methods to delay a decision.

Havelange summoned the chairman of each club to a meeting in Zurich, and a decision was thrashed out. Sporting will pay Benfica the sum of £2.7m over four years. No more arguments – just the small matter of the legal bills.

Benfica president Damasio had angered his opposite number, Santana Lopes, by suggesting that he would be happy to take Sporting's Alvalade Stadium in lieu of the cash, and use it as a training ground, but now the dispute seems to be over at last.

There is trouble elsewhere in Portugal, with international goalkeeper Vitor Baia being suspended for two months after crowd violence at the match between Campomaiorense and Porto.

The referee awarded a corner to Porto, instead of what seemed a clear free-kick to the home club. The corner led to a winning goal for Porto, and the crowd erupted. Baia was seen on TV responding to aggression from Campo fans.

Another riot took place at Felgueiras, where fans known as No Stop Boys clashed with a group of Guimaraes supporters called Insane Guys.

Elsewhere, players at Leca claim that they are living on sandwiches because the cash-strapped club cannot pay their wages. Belenenses have had cheques returned by the bank. And Farense players have gone without pay.

The club manager, Paco Fortes, has been involved in discussions with business leaders, hoping that the city of Faro will take over the club.

No wonder that the influential magazine *A BOLA* commented: "Portuguese football is a bankrupt industry."

ALBERTO DA SILVA

Copa that!

JESUS GIL hits the high spots and the low spots. In a month when Spanish fans have talked about everything except football, *the* talking point is whether the Atletico Madrid president will be allowed to share the royal box with King Juan Carlos during the Cup Final between his club and Barcelona in Zaragoza.

Television pictures of Gil's dust-up with Compostela president Jose Maria Caneda and, in particular, the punch he threw at Compos managing director Jose Fidalgo ***(above)***, have gone round the world in something under 80 days.

The incident underlined the – let's be charitable – lack of class among the ruling class in Spanish football. Contrary to reports, the row had nothing to do with the debate about TV rights, but a statement by Caneda that the citizens of Marbella must be stark staring mad to vote Gil in as Mayor.

The interminable and repetitive exchange of insults as the two men prepared to debate the future of football confirmed a disturbing lack of intelligence and creativity, let alone the sort of decorum expected of club presidents.

Sadly, the repercussions of the incident have been allowed to overshadow the final itself – and a grand final it promises to be.

Admittedly, leaders Atletico have been described as a one-eyed man in a league of blind men and the lack of good football has been the very common denominator of this league. But a sell-out crowd in the Romareda stadium should see an epic final.

The Barcelona press have launched their usual campaign against clubs who are ahead of Barça in the title race, accusing them of receiving favours from referees and playing poor football. Atletico counter those claims with complaints of their own.

Their defender Juanma Lopez was suspended for one game after TV replays showed him elbowing Espanyol's Moises Arteaga. Four days later, Espanyol's Jose Pacheta was punched in the head by Barcelona goalkeeper, Carlos Busquets, in an off-the-ball incident . . . and nothing happened.

Atletico's persecution complex was heightened a week later when a microphone picked up muttered comments by manager Raddy Antic about a linesman who was 40 metres away, and the Disciplinary Committee proposed a two-match ban.

There is no love lost between the clubs and both League and Cup should be decided by the two confrontations in Zaragoza on April 10 and in the Nou Camp on April 20.

GRAHAM TURNER

GERMANY

Arthur Rotmil on the battle for the Bundesliga title

Bayern burst back

BAYERN MUNICH took over the leadership in the Bundesliga, then lost it again to the title-holders, Borussia Dortmund. All seemed far from well with Bayern, but they suddenly burst back with a remarkable victory in the UEFA Cup.

Since the restart in February they have suffered some humiliating defeats – 2-1 in Hamburg, conceding two goals in the last five minutes, 4-1 at home to modest Karlsruhe, and 3-1 at SC Freiburg, who earlier in the season were in bottom place but have since climbed to mid-table.

The media criticise Bayern coach Otto Rehhagel, who claims even after heavy defeats that his tactics are "always right". Yet he has angered the fans by making team changes even following highly successful matches, such as the 5-0 hammering dished out to Lokomotiv Moscow in the UEFA Cup. Sometimes Rehhagel would leave players out and then not have replacements ready for that position.

The constant new formations prevent the building of a compact side and the players are upset. One of them, who would not be named, lamented: "With his attitude the boss will manage to get us all out of form at the same time."

Striker Jurgen Klinsmann explains: "We are playing with five defenders, so that the midfield and attack is always a man short. Thus we cannot exert enough pressure up front like we do in the national team."

Klinsmann has had to play for Bayern as a sole attacker, and does not like it.

The other big Bayern star, captain Lothar Matthaus, warns: "We should look to our mistakes and not always blame others. But remarkably the atmosphere within the squad is not as bad as publicised in the media.

'We are not a team. In my 17 years as a pro I have always felt happier when everything revolved around the team and not around individuals' – Lothar Matthaus

"I agree with Klinsmann – we are not a team," he continues. "In my 17 years as a pro I have always felt happier when everything revolved around the team and not around individuals."

Bayern general manager Uli Hoeness thinks that Bayern need two or three years to catch up with Europe's elite clubs. "Some top footballers, among them Klinsmann, claim that tactically and technically, using zonal marking over the whole pitch, and pressing, Bayern's so-called 'dream team' is miles behind Ajax, Milan and Barcelona," says Hoeness. "But I am not convinced that the gap is quite so big."

After all that, Hoeness appeared closest to the mark. Bayern followed their 2-1 home win over Nottingham Forest with a splendid display in the return, winning 5-1 to go into the semi-finals with confidence restored.

Klinsmann now has 14 goals in the competition this season, equalling the record for any single European season shared by Milan's Jose Altafini (Champions Cup 1962-63), Borussia Dortmund's Lothar Emmerich (Cup-winners Cup 1965-66) and John Wark of Ipswich (UEFA Cup 1980-81).

Borussia Dortmund appear to be Bayern's only serious challengers in the title race. They were involved in the Champions League at the quarter-final stage against the holders, Ajax, but injury, ineligibility and suspensions meant that they were without five regulars for the return leg, which they lost 1-0 in Amsterdam, having lost the first at home by 2-0.

Team manager Ottmar Hitzfeld says: "I would have liked to play with three strikers, like Ajax, but sadly we do not have any top wingers.

"This is a weakness of the 3-5-2 system which all German teams play."

Hitzfeld has done a lot for Dortmund. When he arrived five years ago they were fighting against relegation and the turnover was £10million a year. Now it has trebled. But Bayern still generate nearly double that amount.

The DFB (FA) have decided to open the borders as from next season, not only to players from the 15 EU states, but also to those from the European Free Trade Association, namely Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Iceland and Norway.

Thus footballers from 19 out of the 49 member countries of UEFA will be able to play in the Bundesliga without restrictions.

For all other imports the rules remain the same. Only three foreigners plus two 'assimilated' players will be allowed, and every club will have to have at least 12 players of German nationality.

The question of transfers, as another aspect of the Bosman case, will be debated by the DFB. The present system of compensation is likely to be replaced by another method.

The final of the German Cup will be between Kaiserslautern and Karlsruhe in the Olympic Stadium in Berlin on May 25. In the semi-finals Kaiserslautern beat Bayer Leverkusen 1-0, while Karlsruhe defeated Fortuna Dusseldorf by 2-0.

Two-horse race . . . Borussia Dortmund and Bayern Munich are the main contenders for the Bundesliga

Switzerland

Gates suffer at home

CRITICISM of the championship formula reached a crescendo at the start of the play-off phase, involving eight clubs.

Within 11 weeks the Championship, the two UEFA Cup places, which clubs will contest the Cup Final and the promotion and relegation issues will all have been decided.

No wonder that the hectic and disappointing club football is being ostracised, while the national team attract major interest, especially since reaching the World Cup and European Championship finals in the past two years. But what will happen when the national side are no longer successful?

The exodus of the best players (nine are currently in Western Europe) has substantially weakened the club sides, so that Swiss teams have little or no chance of making an impact on the international scene. As a consequence gates will continue to suffer and this will plunge even the leading clubs into heavy debt.

Title favourites Grasshopper have signed international striker Kubilay Turkyilmaz from Turkey's Galatasaray – the most spectacular transfer during the winter break.

Grasshopper were the only club from the championship pool not to spend most of the break abroad, but their preparations were thorough.

Another prominent newcomer is the Senegalese Suleyman Sane, who has played in France, Germany and lately in Austria for FC Tirol. Now he has joined Lausanne.

Sion snapped up the Australian international Aurelio Vidmar from Feyenoord, and he made an immediate impact by scoring on his debut in a 1-0 win over Lucerne.

ARTHUR ROTMIL

Austria

Rapid racing to the title

The restart saw the Viennese put their rivals in a whirl

THE championship restarted after the winter break with Rapid Vienna storming away from the field.

They are the only club to continue the season with an unchanged squad and are 18 points clear of Austria Salzburg, who will almost certainly forfeit the title after dropping back to fourth from bottom.

Salzburg ended the Croatian 'dynasty' when team manager Otto Baric left last year, top scorer Jure Jurcevic was transferred to Germany's SC Freiburg, and playmaker Mladan Mladenovic emigrated to Japan to join the J.League.

Now the Brazilians Marquinha and Bica are on parade, but they must first be integrated into a weakened side.

Rapid, meanwhile, profited from the Bosman verdict. German striker Caruten Jancker can now, as an EU citizen, play without restriction. But one of the four 'real' foreigners, Ivanov (Bulgaria), Sliwowski (Poland), Mandreko (Tadjikistan) and Pivarnik (Czech Republic), always has to be left out.

Rapid's biggest rivals now are Sturm Graz, who strengthened their ranks with Norwegian goalkeeper Thomas Gill (from Aalborg of Denmark) and former Polish international Marek Swierczewski (ex-GKS Katowice).

FK Austria, led by the German Horst Hrubesch, signed only one player, the talented Wolfgang Hacker from Admira Wacker. Grazer AK, also under a German 'commander', Hans-Ulrich Thomale, signed Slovakian Marek Penksa, lately of Eintracht Frankfurt.

Perhaps the most valuable newcomer is Russia's top keeper, Stanislav Cherchesov, who played for Dynamo Dresden, then for Moscow Spartak, and now performs brilliantly for FC Tirol.

ARTHUR ROTMIL

FRANCE

Lamouchi joins the list

Andre Duclos meets Sabri Lamouchi, the young French international with Tunisian roots, and questions the judgement of teenager Patrick Vieira's move to Milan

THE STREAM of talent from North Africa flows on. Whether born there or in France.

Which leads one to remember that *Il Mago*, Helenio Herrera, pro player for years in France, mighty manager of Barcelona and Internazionale, was born of Argentinian parents in the slums of Casablanca.

And now we have the gifted Sabri Lamouchi of Auxerre, the midfielder who did so well on his debut for France against Portugal that he has serious claims to a place in the eventual squad Aime Jacquet will take to England in June.

The irony is that on the evening Lamouchi first played for France, he might have been playing in the African Nations Cup for Tunisia, the land of his parents, though he was born in France.

"I am proud to have Tunisian parents," he says, "but I took this decision in my soul and conscience, and I have never regretted it." Less than ever, now.

When he joined Auxerre from Ales, he was classified as a foreigner, something he felt would impede his career.

"That was why I chose France. The national team had nothing to do with it, back then. I was far from imagining that one day I'd be part of it."

But now he seems well equipped to flourish in it. Yet another rival, you might say, for Eric Cantona, if not for David Ginola.

"The pressure from Tunisia was very strong," he admits. "There were huge articles in the papers. Everyone got into it – the directors, selectors, politicians." But Lamouchi stood firm.

He is a modest enough fellow, however, emphasising that not until Tunisia's chief playmaker was injured did the cry for his own inclusion go up. He was born in Lyon, and has never spent more than two months at a time in Tunisia.

On his debut for France he set up two goals, one for Youri Djorkaeff, the other for Reynald Pedros. "I wasn't at all apprehensive," he says. "From the bench, I watched a superb match. and I didn't think about the score, or the errors I might make. I simply had a great wish to get into the game."

And what of Patrick Vieira, the young Cannes midfielder signed mid-season by Milan and virtually benched ever since? Up to writing time, he has been used only in an Italian Cup tie against Bologna and in the UEFA Cup ties with Bordeaux.

When Milan signed him, it was assumed they would send him out on loan to a lesser Serie A club, where at least he could get some valuable experience. They kept him; but who knows why?

What hope had he of regular games when Milan's so-called 'turnover' continued to keep so many stars in the stand, let alone on the bench?

Ironically, he could easily have died when taking a lift in a high-powered Toyota from George Weah, en route to the Cote d'Azur. The car crashed, and both men were lucky to get out unhurt.

"It was raining," says Vieira. "We weren't going fast. The accident was more spectacular than serious. Next morning we were training."

He is sad but patient and philosophical, which may or may not be the ideal way to confront a situation which enraged a previous French player there, the far more experienced and famous Jean-Pierre Papin. "No, it isn't becoming an obsession," says Vieira. "I train, hoping that one weekend I shall play.

"There are evenings when I feel depressed. When I get back to my place, I'd really like to see someone, and there's nobody. It's tough. And then when things are going badly, I tell myself that four months are nothing. Or almost nothing. I call the family, my mates. They all tell me that I've been lucky, that I mustn't complain. They are right. I'm not the most unhappy of people. There are others worse off."

But as he says, those who think he has nothing to grumble about because he is making money are quite wrong: "The important thing is to play." Yet should not he or his agent have thought of that before he agreed to go to Milan?

Perhaps they believed that he would go out on loan, but that surely was something which should have been set in stone before he left Cannes.

Marcel Desailly, one French midfielder who has cracked it with Milan, and from the very beginning, is sympathetic, but counsels patience. There's no comparison between them, he says. Vieira is 19, Desailly arrived aged 24, having just won a Champions Cup with Marseille. But he recalls that he had a hard time of it and did not know where he was. Not really much consolation for Vieira.

Former Bordeaux player, the German Gernot Rohr, finds himself in charge of the first team for the third time, knowing that before long he will be back running the youth scheme again. He doesn't mind. "I'm a worker," he says, "even an immigrant worker. My only concern is to give service to my club."

Which he has been doing ever since 1977, when he joined them from Kickers Offenbach: "I've never been able to leave." Lucky club, Bordeaux.

And a club in form, too, as their surprising 3-0 demolition of Milan showed. That second-leg success took them into the UEFA Cup semi-finals . . . on merit.

National squad contender . . . Sabri Lamouchi

Big future for little Metz

Nick Bidwell profiles this season's unexpected success

KEEPING things in perspective is a way of life at FC Metz, the French League season's surprise package.

Back-to-back defeats in March against Lyon and Bordeaux seem to have unhinged their unexpected Championship bid. Yet nobody is feeling sorry for themselves at the club from the Lorraine region of eastern France.

"Of course we were disappointed to falter, but we never really saw ourselves as genuine title candidates," says long-serving Metz boss Joel Muller, a former defender at the club and first-team coach since 1989. "There was never any chance of a small, provincial club like us outgunning the financial might and superstar players of Paris St Germain.

"Although it was marvellous to be top of the table in autumn, it was always going to be problematic to stay there. This is a very talented team, but many of them are youngsters and inconsistency can be a problem. We are also hampered by a small squad. When injuries strike, I have to call up apprentices.

"Rather than the Championship, a more realistic aim is to qualify for Europe by finishing in the top six or winning the League Cup (Metz face Lyon in the final on April 6), and it would be a superb achievement for a club with our limited financial resources. We have been among the League leaders all season and it would be a shame to let all that good work go to waste."

Metz have been a breath of fresh air this term, winning many friends with their neat, attacking football and the individual skills of rookie attackers Cyrille Pouget and Robert Pires. No wonder Pouget, dubbed the 'new Papin', has forced himself into the full French squad and Pires is attracting interest from Benfica and a host of Serie A outfits.

Metz enjoyed a dream start to the 1995-96 campaign. They were unbeaten in their opening 14 games – which included a fine 1-0 away win in Monaco and impressive home victories over Lens, Auxerre and Strasbourg – and had gone three points clear by the end of October.

In the rare position of being pacesetters, Metz's next challenge came in the shape of a visit from Paris St Germain. But it was to all go horribly wrong for the home team in front of a sell-out 27,000 crowd at their Saint Symphorien stadium.

A Rai-inspired PSG ran out comfortable 3-0 winners, and, jolted by that setback, Metz went on to lose subsequent matches against Bastia and Saint-Etienne, losing their top spot in the process.

"The PSG game showed just how much work we still have to do to become a force in French football," says Metz captain and sweeper Sylvain Kastendeuch. "It was a shock for those here who had developed a big head after our early-season successes.

"It did take a while to get the PSG defeat out of our system. It was the start of a six-game run without a win. But we showed a lot of character by bouncing back. From December to early March, we won five and drew one of our six fixtures and we still have an excellent chance of a UEFA Cup qualifying place.

"I have said many times that we will only get something out of this season if we keep our feet on the ground. There is no question that we have a number of incredibly gifted young players. Pires and Pouget up front and midfielders Blanchard and Serredszum have very bright futures. If we can keep this side together, we can be really competitive in two or three years' time."

One of those delighted with the emergence of Metz is club president Carlo Molinari. Their accounts were bright red when he began his second spell at the helm in 1983, but thanks to his astute financial stewardship, bankruptcy was averted and, ever since, Metz have been the epitome of continuity and stability.

"Molinari is FC Metz," says ex-French international defender Patrick Battiston, who began his career at the Lorraine club. "His shrewd dealings in the transfer market and belief in a good youth policy have served Metz so well. They don't have a lot of cash to play with, but Molinari makes sure it is always spent wisely."

'If we can keep this side together, we can be really competitive in two or three years' time' – Sylvain Kastendeuch

One of the founder members of France's first professional set-up in 1932 and now in their 29th consecutive season in the First Division, Metz have indeed worked wonders on a shoestring budget, notably achieving their best League performance in finishing third in 1968-69 and lifting the French Cup in 1984 and 1988.

But by far their most memorable display ever came against Terry Venables' Barcelona in a Cup-winners' Cup first round tie in 1984. After slumping to a 4-2 defeat at home in the first leg, Metz conjured up a 4-1 win at the Nou Camp, sensationally dumping Barça out of the competition. El Tel must still have nightmares about it.

A dozen years on, Metz continue to make life difficult for the big boys. But the smart francs have to be on Paris St Germain claiming this season's League title.

With a squad full of class and experience and attacking weapons Youri Djorkaeff, Julio Cesar Dely Valdes and the Brazilian Rai, PSG have consistently proved themselves a cut above the rest. But their cause could yet be undermined by the apparent lack of faith shown by their board in coach Luis Fernandez.

Successive League defeats against Monaco, Montpellier and Strasbourg, plus a French Cup exit at the hands of Auxerre, fuelled speculation that Fernandez was to be axed and, although he has so far survived, his long-term future at PSG is very much in doubt.

Would-be challengers to PSG, though, are not exactly in abundance. Ever-improving sides like Metz, Lens and newly-promoted Guingamp have all had their moments this season, but lack consistency; last year's champions and runners-up, Nantes and Lyon, have been plagued by injuries and are bogged down in mid-table.

Should Paris St Germain become careless, however, the most likely team to benefit is Auxerre. Their midfield of Philippe Violeau, Moussa Saib, Corentin Martins and new French cap Sabri Lamouchi is the most accomplished in France, and with striker Lilian Laslandes banging in the goals, the 'Auxerrois' have not uttered their last word in the title race.

Striker Dwight Yorke celebrates Villa's League Cup victory

Little's small wonder

John Kelly sees a resurgent Aston Villa win their first trophy under Brian Little

MIRACLE is a word which should never appear in connection with football, but Brian Little's achievements since taking over at Aston Villa in November 1994 are about as close as any player or manager will ever get to divine intervention.

Little has presided over a quiet, though not bloodless revolution at Villa Park, putting together a new-look side after the one he inherited from Ron Atkinson only avoided relegation last season thanks to an own-goal by Ipswich.

A full team, probably capable of holding their own in the FA Premiership – Spink, Barrett, Teale, Fenton, Richardson, Small, Parker, Houghton, Whittingham, Saunders and Atkinson – have all been allowed to leave the club since Little's arrival; to be replaced by younger players who are now forcing their way into the England reckoning, threatening a two-pronged assault on the domestic Cup competitions and showing signs that Villa are almost ready to challenge for the League title they last won in 1981.

Ugo Ehiogu – admittedly one of Atkinson's recruits – Gareth Southgate and Alan Wright have all featured in the England squad, a clear sign that Villa are on the way back to the top. That sentiment was dramatically echoed as Villa out-classed, out-fought and out-played a dismal Leeds United at Wembley, to win the League Cup for a joint record fifth time.

Serbian striker Savo Milosevic has found criticism easier to come by than goals this season – one wag claimed he is the only Serbian still observing the cease-fire – but it was his stunning 25-yard shot which opened the scoring after 21 minutes. Ian Taylor, who supported Villa as a boy, made it 2-0 after 55 minutes, with Dwight Yorke, one of the revelations of the season, scoring a deserved third for Villa just before full-time.

Leeds, it has to be said, were dreadful, and their fans showed their frustration by booing both manager and players off the pitch.

With a UEFA Cup place safely in the bag, Villa can now concentrate on emulating Arsenal's double cup success of three seasons ago, provided thay can get past Liverpool in the semi-final. The other semi is between Chelsea and Manchester United, who have won their last eight FA Cup semi-finals. Chelsea, inspired by Ruud Gullit, will be out to avenge their heavy defeat by United in the 1994 Final. Chelsea present a far more formidable force these days, but United have the scent of another League-and-FA Cup double in their nostrils. With Eric Cantona in irresistible form, they must be favourites to reach the Final for the third year running.

THE TITLE RUN-IN

Man Utd - April 6: Man City (a), April 8: Coventry (h), April 13: Southampton (a), April 17: Leeds (h), April 27: Nottm. Forest (h), May 5: Middlesbrough (a).
Newcastle - April 1: Liverpool (a), April 6: QPR (h), April 8: Blackburn (a), April 13: Aston Villa (h), April 17: Southampton (h), April 27: Leeds (a), May 2: Nottm. Forest (a), May 5: Tottenham (h).

United went back to the top of the FA Premiership, on goal difference, without kicking a ball as Newcastle crashed to another capital away-day defeat, this time 2-0 at Arsenal. A day later, United beat Tottenham 1-0 at Old Trafford – courtesy of Cantona's fifth goal in five games – to go three points clear, although Newcastle have two games in hand. However, considering that Newcastle were 12 points clear with a game in hand at one point, the bookies now make the red United favourites, largely because of the black-and-white United's more difficult run-in ***(see panel)***.

Alex Ferguson's side also hold the psychological advantage, thanks to their 1-0 win at St James' Park. Many critics are now pointing at Faustino Asprilla as the cause of Newcastle's malaise, not for any lack of effort on his part, but rather because of the way Kevin Keegan has had to shuffle his side to accommodate him. However, the real reason for Newcastle's alarming wobble could be nothing more than inexperience. Manchester United know exactly what to expect after three successive title challenges, while it is all new ground for most of Newcastle's young bucks.

Liverpool's 1-0 defeat at Nottingham Forest has virtually ended their hopes of taking the title, leaving them chasing just the FA Cup. Robbie Fowler celebrated his call-up to the full England squad by retaining his PFA Young Player of the Year award, while Les Ferdinand took the Player of the Year award, the first Newcastle player to receive the accolade.

Ferdinand's team-mate David Ginola was the only foreigner short-listed for the main award, a fact which caused a few elevated eyebrows considering the fine seasons enjoyed by Gullit, Yorke and Manchester City's Georgi Kinkladze, who will be joined at Maine Road by compatriot Mikhail Kavelashvili, a £1.3million signing from Spartak Vladikavkaz.

To finance the deal, City sold England Under-21 midfielder Garry Flitcroft to Blackburn for £3.4m. Alan Ball's side are still in the relegation dog-fight, and if they do go down there will be a long queue of clubs waiting to sign Kinkladze, led by Milan, according to the latest speculation.

Southampton's 1-0 win at home to Coventry took them above Ron Atkinson's side and out of the danger zone. Bolton are finally making a fight of it, too. Their 2-1 home win against Sheffield Wednesday took them off the bottom for the first time this season, with doomed QPR now propping up the rest. Manager Ray Wilkins remains positive, and insists he will not quit even if Rangers go down, but he may not have much choice. His side are showing little appetite for the relegation scrap, while those in the same boat have all hands manning the pumps.

Northern Ireland
Baxter puts Linfield in the soup

CHAMPIONS Crusaders kept on course for a League and Cup double when they defeated Irish Cup holders Linfield 2-0 at the quarter-final stage.

Adding insult to injury for the Blues, their former striker Stephen Baxter did the damage with a penalty and a fine headed goal. Baxter, now 30, was once discarded by Linfield, but has seen his career bloom again after joining Crusaders 18 months ago after a spell with Distillery.

Linfield have had a disappointing season and seem unlikely to qualify for European competition next season – unlike Cliftonville. They are struggling in the lower reaches of the Premier League, but if they finish in sixth place or above in the eight-team League, they will enter the Inter-Toto Cup – the first Irish League club to do so.

Crusaders are joined in the semi-finals of the Irish Cup by Glentoran, who needed a replay to dispose of First Division Ballymena United, and the mid-Ulster pair of Glenavon and Portadown. A further indication of the recent shift in power to the County Armagh clubs was the recent announcement by Portadown that they would be moving to a new all-seater stadium in a few years.

Coleraine clinched the First Division championship with seven games to spare. Their 66 goals and 54 points from 21 games bear testimony to the attractive football played by manager Kenny Shiels's team as they outstripped their rivals.

The whole structure of the League is to be examined and the format of two eight-team divisions may be changed for next season.

There were two more managerial changes in the troubled First Division, where most clubs are living on the breadline. Billy Hamilton has been replaced at Distillery by Paul Kirk, youth coach at Glentoran, and former manager Matt Bradley has returned to Newry to replace Peter Watson.

ROY KITSON

Wales
Barry in treble chase

THE TREBLE of Championship, Welsh Cup and League Cup is well within Barry Town's grasp.

In the Welsh Cup semi-finals, they take a slender 1-0 lead to Cwmbran Town for the second leg, after a goal from Paul Hunter settled the first leg. In the other match, Inter Cardiff failed to capitalise on home advantage over Llansantffraid FC, who took home a valuable 1-0 lead via an away goal.

Presuming Barry make it to the final and win the League, the winner of the other semi-final would then be guaranteed a Cup-winners Cup berth.

Llansantffraid's appearance in the final, if it materialises, would be the culmination of a spectacular rise. The club, based in the village of Llansantffraid-ym-Mechain – population 1200 – were formed in 1959 and have since progressed from the bottom to the top of the Welsh system, and beat Ton Pentre 2-1 in last season's League Cup Final.

Barry continue to dominate in the League. They have surpassed Cwmbran Town's 1992-93 record of 20 successive League games unbeaten, reaching 24 at press time, and 35 in all competitions. An 11-point lead with matches in hand means that the spotlight now turns on those chasing second spot and an UEFA Cup place.

Conwy United continue to impress. A steady flow of goals from the League's top scorer, Ken McKenna, who has bagged 30 so far, has helped them rake in the points, and they are currently second in the table.

Fflint Town United are third, manager Steff Rush having pulled them out of a run of poor results with a fine 5-3 win at neighbours Holywell Town.

But the runners-up spot is anyone's, as just one point separates Conwy from reigning champions Bangor City in fifth. Bangor recently parted company with manager Nigel Adkins. His placement, Brian Griffiths, will need to improve his side's form if they are to gain a hat-trick of European appearances.

MEL AP IOR THOMAS

Scotland
Red faces at Parkhead

THE FINAL League clash of the season between Glasgow's Old Firm ended in a 1-1 draw, with a late header from Celtic defender John Hughes cancelling out a first-half goal for Rangers by Alan McLaren.

The result keeps Rangers on course for their eighth successive championship, a stepping stone in their quest to equal Celtic's legendary nine in a row between 1966 and 1975.

International striker Erik Bo Andersen is the latest player to join Rangers, in a £1.3m deal with Aalborg. He teamed up with fellow Dane Brian Laudrup and made his debut in a victory over Hibs at Easter Road. He did not, however, make the starting line-up for the Old Firm clash, though he was on the bench.

Celtic tried to enhance their resources when they attempted to sign striker Jorge Cadete, who was apparently unsettled at Sporting Lisbon. He was taken to Parkhead and paraded before the fans, only for Celtic to realise with embarrassment that there was more red tape to be cut through before the player could legally kick a ball for the club. The deal was eventually completed, but it left Celtic to rue a misguided PR exercise which had backfired in spectacular fashion.

The next major event on Scottish football's calendar also has the Old Firm in starring roles, when they face each other at Hampden in the semi-final of the Scottish Cup.

Rangers have enjoyed a comparatively easy passage to this stage, defeating Clyde, Caledonian Thistle and non-League Keith, but Celtic had a major scare in the quarter finals, trailing 1-0 at home to First Division Dundee United with three minutes remaining.

They managed to summon up a sufficient measure of their traditional fighting spirit to win 2-1, with goals from Pierre van Hooijdonk and Andreas Thom.

The other semi-final is between Hearts and Aberdeen. Hearts have recovered superbly from an indifferent start to the season and, as well as chasing Cup glory, are doing well in the League. Their resurgence has been aided by goalkeeper Giles Rousset from France and Italian midfielder Pasquale Bruno.

Aberdeen already have won a trophy this season, the Coca-Cola Cup last November, and will be hoping to achieve a remarkable double in Roy Aitken's first full season as manager.

Elsewhere, the various issues are beginning to sort themselves out, with Falkirk and Partick Thistle looking likely to fill the bottom two places.

Falkirk manager John Lambie has resigned after becoming the target of unacceptable behaviour by fans – including one attempt to force Lambie's car off the road.

ALAN FAIRLEY

New buy . . . Rangers' Erik Bo Andersen

Euro 96 news

Keir Radnedge reports on a managerial crisis in Romania

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UEFA euro96 England

Iordanescu stays

ANGHEL IORDANESCU will manage Romania at Euro 96 – but only after appearing to step beyond the resignation brink in the latest row over football corruption.

Iordanescu had quit and walked out of a Federation executive meeting in apparent anger that the Romanian League was not to be reduced to 16 clubs as he had wanted, and that no effort was to be made to crack down on the festering problem of match-fixing.

For three days Romanian football tottered on the verge of chaos. Iordanescu had resigned just over a week before a Euro 96 warm-up against Yugoslavia. Assistant Gavrila Balint struggled to hold the national team's planning on course, while the Federation, hoping Iordanescu would change his mind, announced he had "been granted a two-week holiday".

Ultimately it took Romania's state President, Ion Iliescu, to persuade Iordanescu to stay on.

Iordanescu, who took Romania to the quarter-finals of the 1994 World Cup, said he had been promised by Iliescu that match-fixing would be investigated. He added: "The President convinced me that to leave now would be a heavy blow not only for the national team but for all Romanian football."

Iordanescu said he was also responding to calls from fans to see the job through. He said: "I want to take the team to England this summer. But I was most upset by the fact that the practice of fixing League games was public knowledge, and yet nobody ever took any action against it.

"I'm not so naive as to be convinced that my protest would change everything that's wrong in Romanian football. But I hoped it would wake-up some important people and scare some others. My meeting with President Iliescu showed me that my protest was not in vain and could have some positive results. I was also very encouraged by both the tremendous reaction of people in the street and the players in our national squad."

Federation president Mircea Sandu promised to investigate any evidence presented about corruption and a parliamentary commission has been set up to investigate circumstances surrounding results of certain "strategic matches". Iordanescu said: "Of course there are rigged matches in the championship but getting the necessary evidence is not so simple."

Romanian football's problems go back to the Communist era when Steaua, the army club, and Dinamo, on behalf of the secret police, pulled strings to maintain their supremacy.

Iordanescu rejected claims that he quit to take up a £130,000-a-year contract with the Greek club Olympiakos. He said: "It's true the Federation has offered me a contract for a further two years. I did not even discuss the sum involved [£280,000], but I did demand a clause strengthening my authority within the Federation. That's where all this started."

On the playing front, Romania's Ion Timofte has been ruled out of Euro 96 after breaking his leg playing for his Portuguese club, Boavista.

Injury has also put Switzerland midfielder Ciriaco Sforza out for up to six weeks. He damaged ankle ligaments playing for Bayern Munich in their UEFA Cup quarter-final, second leg.

Germany's preparations have been hit by injury to Borussia Dortmund's Andy Moller which could keep the player out for at least a month. National coach Berti Vogts said: "This has really hurt our preparations."

Denmark coach Richard Moller Nielsen has said: "I genuinely think England will be champions on June 30."

He added: "They are playing in front of their own fans and have a lot of good quality players."

Still there . . . Anghel Iordanescu

EURO 96 – THE BUILD-UP

BULGARIA
27.3.96 (Wembley) England v Bulgaria 1-0
24.4.96 (Trnava) Slovakia v Bulgaria .....
28.5.96 (Sofia) Bulgaria v FYR Macedonia ...
02.6.96 (Sofia) Bulgaria v UAE.....
Training camp from May 20 in Sofia.

CROATIA
28.2.96 (Rijeka) Croatia v Poland.....2-1
13.3.96 (Zagreb) Croatia v South Korea.....3-0
26.3.96 (Varazdin) Croatia v Israel 2-0
10.4.96 (Osijek) Croatia v Hungary.....
24.4.96 (Wembley) England v Croatia .....
22.5.96 (tba) Croatia v Bosnia.....
01.6.96 (Dublin) Rep of Ireland v Croatia.....
Training camp from May 20 v 31 in Zagreb.

CZECH REPUBLIC
26.3.96 (Ostrava) Czech Rep v Turkey.....3-0
24.4.96 (Prague) Czech Rep v Rep of Ireland..
29.5.96 (Salzburg) Austria v Czech Rep .....
01.6.96 (Basel) Switzerland v Czech Rep .....
Training camps from May 21 v 25 in Czech Republic and from May 27 to June 2 in Austria and Switzerland.

DENMARK
09.2.96 (Bangkok) Denmark v Romania.....2-2
11.2.96 (Bangkok) Denmark v Finland 0-0
13.2.96 (Bangkok) Denmark v Thailand 3-1
16.2.96 (Bangkok) Denmark v Romania.....1-2
27.3.96 (Munich) Germany v Denmark 2-0
24.4.96 (Copenhagen) Denmark v Scotland .....
02.6.96 (Copenhagen) Denmark v Ghana.....
Training camp late May in Vedak (Copenhagen).

ENGLAND
27.3.96 (Wembley) England v Bulgaria 1-0
14.4.96 (Wembley) England v Croatia .....
18.5.96 (Wembley) England v Hungary .....
23.5.96 (Beijing) China v England .....
26.5.96 (Hong Kong) Hong Kong XI v England .....

FRANCE
24.1.96 (Paris) France v Portugal 3-2
21.2.96 (Nimes) France v Greece.....3-1
27.3.96 (Brussels) Belgium v France 0-2
29.5.96 (Strasbourg) France v Finland .....
01.6.96 (Stuttgart) Germany v France .....
05.6.96 (Lille) France v Armenia.....
A training camp is scheduled for May 23 v 29 at the National Training Centre in Clairefontaine.

GERMANY
21.2.96 (Oporto) Portugal v Germany 1-2
27.3.96 (Munich) Germany v Denmark 2-0
24.4.96 (Rotterdam) Holland v Germany .....
28.5.96 (Belfast) Northern Ireland v Germany .
01.6.96 (Stuttgart) Germany v France .....
04.6.96 (Mannheim) Germany v Liechtenstein .....
A match is also scheduled against Bayer Leverkusen on May 21 (farewell for Rudi Voller).

HOLLAND
14.2.96 (Eindhoven) Holland v Belgium .*cancelled*
24.4.96 (Rotterdam) Holland v Germany .....
29.5.96 (Holland) Holland v China .....
04.6.96 (Rotterdam) Holland v Rep of Ireland .....
Training camp from May 14 to June 4 in Noordwijk aan Zee and June 7 v 9 in London.

ITALY
24.2.96 (Terni) Italy v Wales 3-0
01.6.96 (Budapest) Hungary v Italy.....

PORTUGAL
24.1.96 (Paris) France v Portugal 3-2
21.2.96 (Porto) Portugal v Germany 1-2
27.3.96 (Lisbon) Portugal v Greece 1-0
29.5.96 (Dublin) Rep of Ireland v Portugal.....
Training camps from May 27 to June 5 in Republic of Ireland.

ROMANIA
04.2.96 (Doha) Qatar v Romania 2-3
09.2.96 (Bangkok) Romania v Denmark.....2-2
11.2.96 (Bangkok) Romania v Thailand.....3-0
13.2.96 (Bangkok) Romania v Finland..... 1-1
16.2.96 (Bangkok) Romania v Denmark..... 2-1
27.3.96 (Belgrade) Yugoslavia v Romania.....1-0
24.4.96 (Bucharest) Romania v Armenia .....
01.6.96 (Bucharest) Romania v UAE.....

RUSSIA
07.2.96 (Malta) Malta v Russia.....0-2
09.2.96 (Malta) Russia v Iceland 3-0
11.2.96 (Malta) Russia v Slovenia 3-1
27.3.96 (Dublin) Rep of Ireland v Russia ...0-2
24.4.96 (Brussels) Belgium v Russia .....
25.5.96 (Doha) Qatar v Russia .....
29.5.96 (tba) Russia v UAE .....
02.6.95 (Moscow) Russia v Poland.....

SCOTLAND
27.3.96 (Glasgow) Scotland v Australia 1-0
24.4.96 (Copenhagen) Scotland v Denmark .....
26.5.96 (Connecticut) US v Scotland.....
Training camp in North America in late May.

SPAIN
07.2.96 (Las Palmas) Spain v Norway 1-0
24.4.96 (Oslo) Norway v Spain .....

SWITZERLAND
13.3.96 (Luxembourg) Luxemb'rg v Switzerland.1-1
27.3.96 (Vienna) Austria v Switzerland.....1-0
24.4.96 (Switz) Switzerland v Wales .....
01.6.96 (Basel) Switzerland v Czech Rep .....
A training camp to be held by the end of May.

TURKEY
14.2.96 (Izmir) Turkey v Belarus 3-2
26.3.96 (Ostrava) Czech Rep v Turkey 3-0
09.4.96 (Baku) Azerbaijan v Turkey .....
01.5.96 (Turkey) Turkey v Ukraine .....
29.5.96 (Tallinn) Estonia v Turkey .....
02.6.96 (Helsinki) Finland v Turkey .....
Training camp in Finland from May 24 to June 4

Men in the middle

The full list of referees for the group games at Euro 96 is as follows:

June 8:
Eng v Switz .....*Manuel Diaz Vega* (Spa)
June 9:
Spain v Bulg ..... *Piero Ceccarini* (Ita)
Ger v Czech .....*David Elleray* (Eng)
Den v Port.....*Mario Van der Ende* (Hol)
June 10:
Hol v Scot ..... *Leif Sundell* (Swe)
Rom v Fra .....*Hellmut Krug* (Ger)
June 11:
Ita v Rus.....*Leslie Mottram* (Sco)
Turk v Cro.... *Serge Muhmenthaler* (Swi)
June 13:
Switz v Hol .....*Atanas Ouzounov* (Bul)
Bulg v Rom, ...*Peter Mikkelsen* (Den)
June 14:
Czech v Ita ..*Antonio J Lopez Nieto* (Spa)
Port v Turk.....*Sandor Puhl* (Hun)
June 15:
Scot v Eng .....*Pierluigi Pairetto* (Ita)
Fra v Spa .....*Vadim Zhuk* (Bls)
June 16:
Rus v Ger .....*Kim Milton Nielsen* (Den)
Cro v Den.....*Marc Batta* (Fra)
June 18:
Scot v Switz.....*Vaclav Krondl* (Cze)
Fra v Bulg ..... *Dermot Gallagher* (Eng)
Hol v Eng .....*Gerd Grabher* (Aus)
Rom v Spa .....*Ahmet Cakar* (Tur)
June 19:
Rus v Czech.....*Anders Frisk* (Swe)
Cro v Port.....*Bernd Heynemann* (Ger)
Ita v Ger .....*Guy Goethals* (Bel)
Turk v Den.....*Nikolai Levnikov* (Rus)

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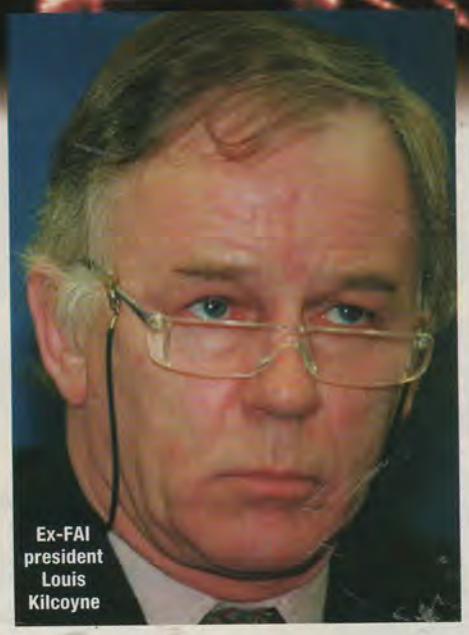
Top man is voted out

FAI president goes after a string of resignations



Ex-FAI president Louis Kilcoyne

FOR the first time in the 75-year history of the FAI, the president has been voted out of office.

After weeks of resignations and allegations, in a saga which became known as Merriongate, Louis Kilcoyne was voted out by the FAI Senior Council, and treasurer Joe Delaney had his resignation accepted. Earlier, chief executive Sean Connolly, accountant Michael Morris and national coach Joe McGrath had resigned.

Some of the executive officers had wanted Connolly out long ago. They eventually solved the problem when they found that he had made out an FAI cheque for £8,000 to himself, which he later repaid.

Morris, who claims he was told to "adjust the books", is suing the association, while McGrath, who has found a coaching job in New Zealand, also is taking legal proceedings. Connolly has a new job with a communications company in Dublin.

Delaney's 'crime' was to deal with a well-known ticket tout to try to ensure a supply of World Cup tickets for Irish supporters. Unfortunately for him, the tout didn't pay up. Delaney then paid over £110,000 of his own money to the FAI. He now admits that he should have made his fellow officers aware of these facts much earlier.

As president, Kilcoyne oversaw these transactions, but did nothing about it. Many football folk never forgave the Kilcoyne family for selling Glenmalure Park, the former home of Shamrock Rovers, for a housing development in 1988.

Senior vice president Pat Quigley takes over the hot seat until the association's AGM in July. Brendan Menton Junior, son of a former FAI president, is the acting secretary until the end of August.

Critics of the FAI claim that the officers undid in two months all the good work done by Jack Charlton and his team over the previous 10 years. But some good may have come out of the saga. Recent revelations proved that the elected officers had too much power. Hopefully, a similar situation will never be allowed to develop again.

The semi-finals of the FAI Harp Lager Cup feature the four top clubs in the Premier Division. Bohemians are home to St Patrick's Athletic, favourites for the League title, and Shelbourne, beaten finalists last year, travel to Sligo.

Bray Wanderers are guaranteed promotion, but the second place looks like being a close fight between Finn Harps and Cobh Ramblers.

SEAN CREEDON

Belgium

Benelux bonanza?

AS CLUB BRUGGE pull irresistibly away for their 10th League title, most of the speculation in Belgium centres not on Anderlecht's remote chance of catching up, but on whether both clubs might soon be competing in a Low Countries Super League.

The idea is the brainchild of Anderlecht manager, Michel Verschueren. He would like to see the season rounded off by an experimental 30-day, 16-club knockout play-off, including the top eight clubs from Holland. Should the event be a success, it could also incorporate leading sides from England and Germany.

"I want the public to see greater intensity, more emotion and better performances," said Verschueren, who ideally would like to see his tournament staged at the end of next season. Failing that, he said, it must be in place before Euro 2000, when Belgium and Holland stage the European Championship Finals.

Typical of the reactions was that of Pierre Delahaye, general manager of Standard. "It's not a bad idea," he said. "It could be a very big attraction. Who, for instance, would not want to see a match involving Anderlecht and Ajax or PSV?"

Arguments against Verschueren's proposal appear to concern fixture congestion and motivation at the end of an arduous season. With the champions of both countries still going forward to the Champions Cup and the next three qualifying for the UEFA Cup, the only rewards would seem to be financial.

In which case Verschueren might be better employed asking his own players how they managed to blow virtually their last chance of the title by going down 3-1 at home to mid-table Harelbeke.

The damage was done by the Zairean Michel N'Gonge, who hit a 30-minute hat-trick after Bruno Versavel had put Anderlecht ahead.

To complete a bad day for the hosts, they had Georges Grun sent off.

NICHOLAS HARLING

Holland

Luc tops player poll

Award further enhances the reputation of Nilis, PSV Eindhoven's Belgian international

Players' player . . . award-winning Nilis (left) takes on Barça's Ferrer

LUC NILIS, the Belgian international forward, has been voted Footballer of the Year for 1995 by members of the VVCS, the Dutch players' union.

It is always a credit for a foreign player to win such an award, and the man has a fine reputation. Some of our disciplinary committees can be just a little bit arrogant, to say the least. But when PSV's Nilis caught an opponent in the face with an elbow (the match was on Dutch TV), the disciplinary committee agreed it was an accident and took no action against him – thanks to his name and clean record in Holland.

Edwin van der Sar (Ajax) was voted Goalkeeper of the Year, and Patrick Kluivert (Ajax) Talent of the Year. Ajax also were voted Club of the Year.

As with most top European teams, Ajax are doing their best to combat changes in the transfer laws by getting their top players to sign extensions to their contracts. Dutch internationals Michael Reiziger and Edgar Davids want time to think about it. Right now, I cannot think of any club – or FA – who have any real idea of how the new system will work out.

A Scotsman who made his name as a player with Birmingham City has become chief coach at Willem II. Jimmy Calderwood, a fanatical Rangers supporter, not only arranges video screenings of Rangers, but in his earlier days as a coach at a Dutch amateur club, he protested about the club colours – Celtic's green!

He has been promoted from assistant coach at Willem II after a sudden run of bad results led to chief coach Theo de Jong's dismissal.

Calderwood still regrets the fact he never played for Rangers, but remembers the day his father kicked out of the house a Celtic scout who wanted to sign him.

How much money will be banked by the Dutch FA when their own commercial TV station goes into action next August? The station has as yet no official name, but it is known to be supported by international companies, including Philips, PSV's backers.

The rows go on and on, with top clubs angry at having to bow and scrape to the Dutch FA. Millions of guilders will be involved, providing all the professional clubs with a lot of money. But will it be, as the Dutch FA suggested, 25 per cent of the income going to all clubs and 75 per cent to the clubs being screened?

Whatever the deal, there is anger that nothing will go to amateur football.

Ajax got through their Champions Cup quarter-final, beating Borussia Dortmund 2-0 in Germany and 1-0 at home. Feyenoord drew 2-2 away to Borussia MG before winning 1-0 at home. But PSV, who drew 2-2 in Barcelona with both goals from Nilis, lost at home and went out of the UEFA Cup 5-4 on aggregate.

ERIC NICHOLLS

Sweden

Andreas starts with a double

ANDREAS ANDERSSON, recently transferred from Degerfors to IFK Gothenburg, made a two-goal debut for Sweden as they beat Australia 2-0.

Andersson won the praise of national coach Tommy Svensson, who said: "He looks exactly like Johnny Ekstrom 10 years ago, and is even quicker. Andersson is improving rapidly."

The previous two-goal debutants for Sweden were Klas Ingesson against Algeria in 1989 and Tomas Brolin against Wales in 1990.

Svensson is busy experimenting with a 3-5-2 formation but laments the lack of a genuine playmaker. Brolin filled the role during USA 94, but it is doubtful whether he can reach those heights again.

Jonas Thern and Stefan Schwarz can be trusted only to do defensive spadework, while Par Zetterberg may have wasted his chance to establish himself in the national colours.

IFK's star forward, Jesper Blomqvist, returned from the Far East tour with a thigh injury, which more or less spoiled his chances to impress Svensson. But the evergreen Roland Nilsson played excellently, revelling in the role of a wing-back.

AIK have sold stopper Jesper Jansson to Stockholm rivals Djurgarden. They did not like the idea, but could have risked losing Jansson abroad without any transfer fee.

PENTTI HIETANEN

Denmark

Aarhus still on course

AGF are well placed to do the League and Cup double

LEAGUE leaders AGF Aarhus kept on course for the Danish double with a 2-1 Giro Cup quarter-final win away to Silkeborg, which opened the spring season in Denmark.

They were 2-0 up after 10 minutes through Gunner Lind and Nocko Jokovic, and a late reply from Per Knudsen was no consolation for the Silkeborg side, now led by Preben Elkjaer.

AGF now face a two-leg semi-final against Herfolge, who are in the relegation zone in the Superliga.

Second-placed Brondby have a game in hand, but went into the second half of the season six points behind AGF.

Aarhus have a mixture of young talent and highly experienced veteran internationals, including Torben Piechnik and Jan Bartram, back home after time off spent travelling round the world. Henrik Mortensen, once of Norwich, also is there, as well as rising midfielder Stig Tofting, an outsider to join the Euro 96 squad.

Brondby were the busiest team in the transfer market during the winter, snapping up new players with alacrity. However, 'new' is hardly the right description for 1992 European Championship heroes John Jensen, ex-Arsenal, and Lars Olsen, since they have now returned to their former club.

OB Odense took Bertrand Tchami from San Lorenzo of Argentina and Lyngby brought Bent Christensen back from Young Boys of Switzerland.

JIM HOLDEN

Done Gunning . . . John Jensen has left Arsenal for Brondby

Luxembourg

Joy for Jeunesse

HEAVY snow delayed the restart after the mid-season break in Luxembourg, but champions Jeunesse Esch soon made up for lost time.

They beat Aris Bonnevoie 7-1 and FC Wiltz 6-1 in successive weeks, with Patrick Morocutti scoring once in the first match and four times in the second.

Jeunesse head the table, but Grevenmacher kept up the pressure with a 6-1 victory away to Red Boys Differdange, who now seem certain to be relegated.

The top two have 32 points but Jeunesse have a nine-goal advantage – 41-15 compared with 31-14. Union Luxembourg are six points behind.

The national team fully deserved their draw against Switzerland, including Sforza and Chapuisat, in Luxembourg City. Manuel Cardoni scored after eight minutes, and the Swiss left it late before getting a lucky equaliser, debited to keeper Paul Koch.

TIM BRICE

Finland

Hjelm gets his century

ARI HJELM became the first Finnish player to win 100 full international caps when he played in the 1-0 away defeat by Kuwait.

Hjelm, 33, thought that he had passed the milestone already during Finland's stay in Thailand in February, but there was a dispute over the status of some of Finland's earlier friendly matches in which he had played.

His first full cap was in 1983, against East Germany, and he jokes: "I was chosen to play only because our centre-forward, Jallu Rantanen, could not find his shorts!"

Hjelm's club, HJK Helsinki, hit the headlines for the wrong reasons when some of their players were involved in a street brawl while in Cyprus for pre-season training. Young forward Oscar Geagea had to receive medical help after being hit by a broken bottle.

PENTTI HIETANEN

Iceland

Gudni signs on again

INTERNATIONAL skipper Gudni Bergsson has signed a new contract with relegation-threatened English Premier League side Bolton, which will tie him to the club until 1998.

Since signing from Tottenham two years ago, Bergsson – now 31 – has been a fixture in the Bolton defence, and his new deal came two days after scoring in the side's 1-0 win against Leeds at Elland Road. This was his fourth of the season and it lifted him into second place in the club's scoring charts.

Meanwhile, the domestic League campaign starts on May 23, with IA Akranes searching for their fifth title in a row. They begin at home to newly-promoted Stjarnan, while Cup-holders KR Reykjavik make the tricky trip to last year's InterToto entrants, IBK Keflavik.

Iceland's newest competition, the League Cup, kicked off on March 14. The tournament, involving all the senior clubs except KR, is being played on artificial surfaces in the Reykjavik area. This means some hard travelling – as well as hard football – for many of the country's rural clubs in their quest to reach the final in mid-May.

RAB CHRISTIE

Bergsson is Bolton's until 1998

Greece

Argiris makes them angry

NOT ONLY did AEK Athens and Olympiakos Piraeus share the outcome of their crucial First Division match at Karalskakis Stadium in Piraeus – they also shared criticism of referee Argiris Papahitzios.

With sticks and stones flying from irate fans, and cursing and pushing from players, Papahitzios did not stop play to cool things down. And his last act, whistling the end of the match at least five minutes before time, brought more of the same from fans, players and coaches, too.

"The Championship has no meaning for us," said AEK's Dusan Bajevic. "We will concentrate on the Cup. It is a shame what went on tonight. Look at all the videos of our losses this season. This is the only way AEK can be stopped, by crooked officiating."

Bajevic's remarks were echoed by Olympiakos coach Takis Persias. Papahitzios was criticised for not stopping the match when irate fans began throwing debris on the pitch and he showed a number of yellow and red cards. He also failed to give a clear penalty in favour of Olympiakos, did not add injury time, and did not co-operate with the linesmen on offsides.

There have been many complaints against referees this season and five officials appeared before the federal referee committee in February. One, George Spaneas, was criticised for awarding a penalty against Panionios in their home game with Panathinaikos in February, which in no way resembled a penalty. He was attacked by Panionios officials and fans on and off the pitch.

The 1-1 draw between AEK and Olympiakos was beneficial to Panathinaikos, who beat Ethnikos 3-0 at home and moved further away from the pack in first place with 64 points. AEK are second with 61 and Olympiakos a distant third with 55 points.

Panathinaikos did have some bad news, however. International striker Alexis Alexoudis injured a leg and will be out for the rest of the season. The injury came just before the second leg of the Champions League quarter-final with Legia Warsaw.

The 3-0 victory, with goals from Warzycha (two) and Borelli, set up a semi-final meeting with defending champions Ajax Amsterdam, a repeat of the 1971 Champions Cup Final at Wembley.

Demis Nikolaldis scored twice in Apollon Athens' surprise 3-1 victory at PAOK Salonika to go through to the Greek Cup Final 4-2 on aggregate. They will meet AEK, who beat Athinaikos 5-0 and 1-0.

LOU ECONOMOPOULOS

Turkey

Fenerbahce have double chance

THERE is no stopping Fenerbahce just now. A run of 13 consecutive League games without defeat put them on top of the table – and they are in the Cup Final as well.

A 2-1 defeat of Besiktas in a derby match was vital for Fenerbahce, who now have 64 points, three ahead of Trabzonspor. Besiktas still have a chance on 57, but Galatasaray are out of the running on 48, after four-game run of two draws and two defeats.

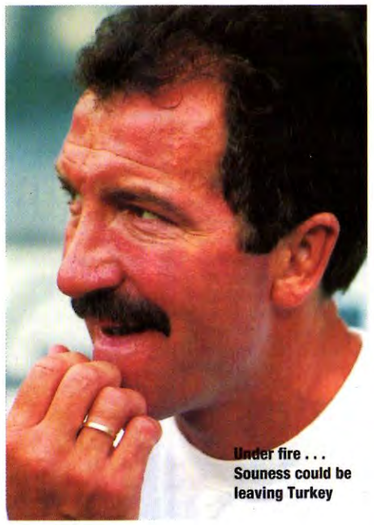
Galatasaray have had some consolation by beating Samsunspor 3-2 on aggregate (3-1, 0-1) in the Cup semi-finals, while Fenerbahce were winning 4-3 against Gaziantep (2-1, 2-2). But there is considerable conjecture over the future of manager Graeme Souness now that there has been a change of directors.

If Gala lose the Cup Final and League match against Fenerbahce, Souness almost certainly will go.

Members of the Gala congress voted 1510-713 in favour of rejecting the current board, led by long-serving Alp Yalman, and to go for a rival group under Faruk Suran. After the voting, Suran said that there would be changes in the team and the technical staff.

Under Yalman, Gala had become established as a threat to the leading teams of most European countries, but results in the past two seasons have been disappointing.

HASAN CEMALI



Under fire . . . Souness could be leaving Turkey

IN BRIEF

Albania
Teuta by a touch

THE big match of the season so far ended in a 1-1 draw between FK Tirana, the champions, and Teuta, the Cup-holders.

So after 23 games Teuta lead with 37 points, one ahead of Tirana.

The season's biggest crowd, 17,000, went to the Qemal Stafa Stadium to see Tirana go ahead early on through Aurel Miloti, but Mikel Furrxhi equalised in the second half.

Tirana manager Sulejman Mema said: "We were unable to change the pace of the game – that was our problem."

Flamurtari moved into contention for a place in the UEFA Cup by beating Apolonia 3-0 and go third on 30 points.

GEZIM NUSHI

Malta
Sliema hit the front

SLIEMA WANDERERS are the new leaders of the Premier League. They finally ended a bad 16-match run against rivals Valletta, lasting five years, with a 2-1 win despite having defender Dimech sent off after 22 minutes.

Zarb fired Valletta into the lead on the stroke of half-time, but Wright's cross from the left was headed by Debono into his own net for the equaliser, and substitute Muscat scored the decider.

Sliema, reinforced by the recent signing of Bonello from Hamrun, now lead Valletta by two points with five games to go. Floriana and champions Hibernians are back in contention.

National striker Busuttil decided to go back on his original decision to quit the national team. Less than a month ago he declared that he no longer felt motivated to play for Malta.

National coach Milorad Kosanovic's first game will be against his native Yugoslavia – Malta's first competitive commitment in the World Cup Group Six preliminary round in June.

DOMENICO AQUILINA

Israel
Two tough it out

MACCABI HAIFA turned the battle for the National League title into a two-horse race when they beat fellow challengers Betar Jerusalem 2-0.

The battle to challenge Maccabi Tel Aviv for the title had previously been a two-horse race between Haifa and the Jerusalemites. Betar have now fallen back to nine points behind the Tel Avivians.

Hapoel Beersheva's fortunes continue to flag. Eli Guttman, their third coach this season, could not prevent a 5-0 hiding from Maccabi Tel Aviv.

Hapoel Taiba, currently top of the second division, look set to become the first side from Israel's main Arab population to have a team in the National League. However, there is pressure on the club to curb an unruly element in the crowd who have been shouting anti-Jewish slogans at matches.

DEREK FATTAL

DENMARK

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP RECORD
1960: 1st round
1964: Fourth place
1968, 1972, 1976, 1980: 1st round
1984: Semi-finals
1988: Finals 1st round
1992: Champions

HOW THEY QUALIFIED

7.9.94 – Skopje (Att: 25,000)
MACEDONIA 1 (Stojkovski 4)
DENMARK 1 (Povlsen 87)
Denmark: Schmeichel – Olsen, Rieper, Kjeldbjerg, Steen Nielsen, Helveg, Jensen (Larsen 67), Vilfort (Povlsen 53), B Laudrup, M Laudrup, Christensen.

12.10.94 – Copenhagen (Att: 40,075)
DENMARK 3 (Vilfort 35, Jensen 70, Strudal 85)
BELGIUM 1 (Degryse 30)
Denmark: Schmeichel – Olsen, Rieper, Helveg, Friis-Hansen, Risager (Kjeldbjerg 76), Vilfort (Jensen 70), Steen Nielsen, M Laudrup, B Laudrup, Strudal.

16.11.94. – Seville (Att: 38,000)
SPAIN 3 (Nadal 41, Donato 57, Luis Enrique 87)
DENMARK 0
Denmark: Schmeichel – Helweg, Rieper, Olsen, Risager, Friis-Hansen (Christensen 65), Steen Nielsen, Vilfort, Strudal (Jensen 46), M Laudrup, B Laudrup.

29.3.95 – Limassol (Att: 15,000)
CYPRUS 1 (Agathocleous 45)
DENMARK 1 (Schjonberg 2)
Denmark: Schmeichel – Laursen, Rieper, Friis-Hansen (Helveg 46), Schjonberg, J Hogh, Steen Nielsen, Nielsen, Rasmussen, M Laudrup, B Laudrup.

26.4.95. – Copenhagen (Att: 38,888)
DENMARK 1 (Nielsen 70)
MACEDONIA 0
Denmark: Schmeichel – Laursen, Rieper, J Hogh, Schjonberg, Thomsen, Steen Nielsen, Nielsen (Helveg 78), Rasmussen (Bo Andersen 46), M Laudrup, B Laudrup.

7.6.95. – Copenhagen (Att: 40,199)
DENMARK 4 (Vilfort 45, 50, B Laudrup 59, M Laudrup 76)
CYPRUS 0
Denmark: Schmeichel – Laursen, Rieper, Hogh, Schjonberg, Steen Nielsen (Rasmussen 46), Jensen, Vilfort (Bo Andersen 87), Beck, M Laudrup, B Laudrup.

16.8.95. – Yerevan (Att: 22,000)
ARMENIA 0
DENMARK 2 (M Laudrup 32, Nielsen 46)
Denmark: Schmeichel – Laursen, Rieper, Hogh, Risager (Schjonberg 85), Thomsen, Jensen (Nielsen 46), Steen Nielsen, Bech, M Laudrup, P Rasmussen.

6.9.95. – Brussels (Att: 40,000)
BELGIUM 1 (Grun 25)
DENMARK 3 (M Laudrup 19, Beck 21, Vilfort 65)
Denmark: Schmeichel – J Hogh, Risager, Rieper, Laursen, Steen Nielsen, Thomsen, Vilfort, M Laudrup (Schjonberg 90), Beck (Rasmussen 70), B Laudrup (Bo Andersen 80).

11.10.95. – Copenhagen (Att: 40,260)
DENMARK 1 (Vilfort 47)
SPAIN 1 (Hierro 17pen)
Denmark: Schmeichel – Laursen, J Hogh, Rieper, Risager, Piechnik, Vilfort, Steen Nielsen (Wieghorst 67), M Laudrup, Beck, Rasmussen.

15.11.95. – Copenhagen (Att: 40,208)
DENMARK 3 (Schjonberg 19, Beck 35, M Laudrup 58)
ARMENIA 1 (Petrossian 47)
Denmark: Schmeichel – Helveg, Rieper, J Hogh, Risager, Schjonberg, Steen Nielsen, Vilfort, Beck, M Laudrup, Rasmussen.

FINAL TABLE – GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spain	10	8	2	0	25	4	26
Denmark	**10**	**6**	**3**	**1**	**19**	**9**	**21**
Belgium	10	4	3	3	17	13	15
Macedonia	10	1	4	5	9	18	7
Cyprus	10	1	4	5	6	20	7
Azerbaijan	10	1	2	7	5	17	5

Lightning strikers

Jim Holden on why the Danish triumph of four years ago is unlikely to be repeated

CAN the fairytale winners of the last European Championships in 1992 possibly repeat their success? Denmark's remarkable triumph four years ago, when they had not even originally qualified for the tournament and got in only because of the problems caused by the civil war in Yugoslavia, was one of sport's great romantic stories.

Manager Richard Moller Nielsen believes it is possible, but admits that this time his Danish team will play with all the pressure that being reigning champions brings. Instead of putting down his paint brushes from re-decorating the kitchen, as he did in 1992, to leap to glory, Moller Nielsen has now had months and months to put the gloss finish on his team.

He explained: "Of course it will be different. Expectations are much higher because the Danish fans now know that winning a tournament is possible. The players will be under tremendous pressure, but you have to live with that. And I can tell them that it certainly won't be anything like the expectations that are on players from the big nations like England, Germany and Italy.

"Our fans still know that Denmark is a small country with only five million people, and only three full-time professional clubs. Sometimes I think other nations forget that. Denmark has had a lot of good players and some success in the past. I think we have done amazingly well considering our size."

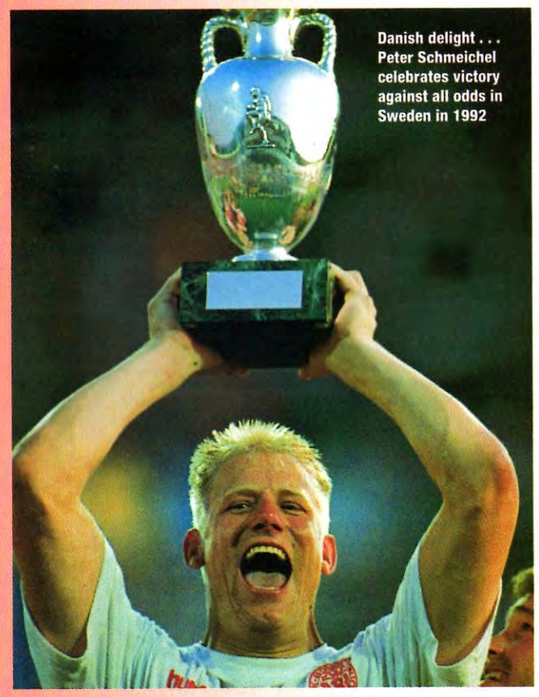
There are likely to be seven survivors in Denmark's squad from the team who beat Germany in the 1992 finals. But maybe only Peter Schmeichel, Kim Vilfort and Brian Laudrup can be sure of a starting place in the first match, against Portugal at Hillsborough on June 9 in Group D.

Moller Nielsen's squad this time round is a much younger affair, with a clutch of talented Danish League players with minimal international experience vying for places in the team. Striker Erik Bo Andersen, just signed by Scottish champions Rangers, is a key example, with only four caps so far.

The experienced coach, for whom Euro 96 will be his Danish swansong before taking over the Finnish national team in the autumn, said: "I think the quality and standard of my squad will be about the same as 1992. There are some top-class men like Peter Schmeichel and the Laudrup brothers, and we also have the enthusiasm and legs of youth. I hope it will be a good blend.

"A vital factor then was team spirit, and I feel we have a good attitude developing again. But you will get no predictions from me about how we shall fare. I'm afraid I take it one game at a time. It's the only way.

"We are certainly in an exciting group. Portugal and Croatia are thrilling teams, and nobody should underestimate Turkey. It will be tough, but I think English fans will enjoy watching the games."



Danish delight . . . Peter Schmeichel celebrates victory against all odds in Sweden in 1992

'The hosts apart, no country will have more fans in England . . . but it is unlikely Denmark will repeat the heroics of 1992. Lightning rarely strikes twice – even in the fairytales of Hans Christian Andersen'

In fact, privately, the Danes are very pleased with Group D. They have avoided traditional *betes noires* Spain and Romania, as well as Italy and Russia. There is no reason why they cannot reach the knock-out stages, from where anything is possible, as 1992 so memorably proved.

Denmark are sure to play the 3-5-2 system developed by their former manager, Sepp Piontek, in the 1980s, and with one of the world's best goakeepers in Schmeichel they have a solid base on which to build.

Real Madrid's Michael Laudrup will be the key outfield player. He is one of the world's great players, though he has not played in a major tournament since 1988, when he disappointed hugely. This may well be his last chance to prove on the biggest stage that he can be considered the all-time great that his obvious talent merits.

The elder Laudrup now plays in midfield as playmaker, with brother Brian a dazzling, darting threat in attack. The linking with Bo Andersen at Rangers for three months at club level has forged a partnership which could work in Denmark's favour.

The wing-backs are both 24-year-olds, Thomas Helveg from Udinese and Jacob Laursen, still playing at home with Silkeborg. If they perform consistently, it makes the system operate smoothly.

Moller Nielsen also seems to have decided to fill the squad with experienced cover like former skipper Lars Olsen and midfielder John Jensen – both now back at Brondby after sojourns abroad. That gives him valuable options.

The qualifying process proved, at the very least, that Denmark have a solid feel. Their only defeat was away to Spain, and a victory in Belgium, no mean feat, ensured their opportunity to defend the trophy.

No country, the hosts apart, will have more fans cheering them on this summer. The peaceful *Roligans* are arriving in force – at least 11,000 of them officially, and probably more looking for tickets. The North Sea will be as awash with ships as it was in Viking times.

Even with that support, though, it is unlikely that Denmark will be able to repeat the heroics of 1992. Lightning rarely strikes twice – even in the fairytales of Hans Christian Andersen.

KEY MAN: MICHAEL LAUDRUP

FEW PLAYERS in the history of the game can boast more than a decade of club service at Juventus, Barcelona and now Real Madrid. You have to be something special.

Yet Michael Laudrup has never quite fulfilled the astonishing promise and poise which he showed when he turned down Liverpool at the age of 17 because they wouldn't give him a long-enough contract. Sure, he impressed in the 1986 World Cup in Mexico with some dazzling play, but a foolish dispute with Richard Moller Nielsen over tactics and style meant that he had to miss the 1992 European Championships triumph.

Laudrup has since returned to the side and made his peace, so much so that he is captain of the team and its midfield playmaker. He celebrates his 32nd birthday during the tournament, and surely knows it is his last chance of international acclaim. He scored a number of vital goals in qualifying, yet then launched into another problem with arguments over sponsorship contracts that could even threaten his participation.

His non-appearance would be a mortal blow, not only in terms of talent, but also psychologically. He has become the heart of the side again. A record 34 goals in 85 matches shows Laudrup's pedigree. His tally would have been far more than 100 but for self-imposed exile. Will he be remembered too much as a wasted talent?

THE COACH

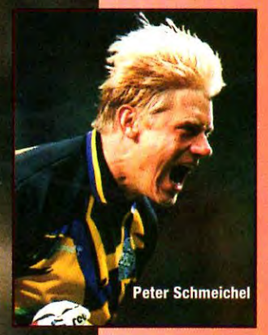
Richard MOLLER NIELSEN
19.8.37.
He had two caps for Denmark as a player and his determination as a central defender earned him the nick-name 'Lionheart'. However, a knee injury ended his career early and he switched to coaching. He won the League title with Odense in 1977 and 1982 and coached the Danish Olympic and Under-21 teams. Was right-hand man to the great Sepp Piontek in the dynamite days, and took over in 1990, losing the first match 1-0 to England at Wembley. Since then he has a superb record of 31 wins, 16 draws and 12 defeats in 59 matches. The highlight, of course, was guiding Denmark to triumph in the 1992 European Championships. He was voted *WORLD SOCCER*'s manager of the year in '92. Narrow failure to qualify for the 1994 World Cup was forgiven and how he would love to end his time where he began with a match at Wembley in this summer's Final. He starts as national coach of Finland in the autumn.

THE PLAYERS

GOALKEEPERS

Lars HOGH
14.1.59. OB Odense. 8 caps.
Played in the 1986 World Cup, including the 5-1 defeat by Spain. Veteran with more than 600 games for his only club, and now owns and runs a shoe shop in his native Odense. Returned to top form recently, and could oust Krogh to win a place on the bench.

Mogens KROGH
31.10.63. Brondby. 5 caps.
Eternally in the shadow of Schmeichel, and now battling for No.2 spot with Lars Hogh. Famous in Denmark as vociferous spokesman for the players' union. Impressive in Brondby's various European club travels, including this season's win at Anfield.



Peter Schmeichel

Peter SCHMEICHEL
18.11.63. Manchester Utd (Eng). 81 caps.
First-choice keeper since 1988, rated one of the world's best. Brilliant performance in the 1992 Final helped Denmark win the trophy. Huge success at Old Trafford where he has won two League titles and an FA Cup. Twice Denmark's Player of the Year. Dominates the penalty area, and often assaults defenders' eardrums.

DEFENDERS

Jacob FRIIS-HANSEN
6.3.67. Bordeaux (Fra). 15 caps.

Thomas HELVEG
24.6.71. Udinese (Ita). 10 caps.
Wing-back whose fast-raiding style won him a £500,000 move from OB Odense to Italy. Helped Udinese win promotion to Serie A last year, and was Denmark's Player of the Year in 1994. Now a first choice for Moller Nielsen.

Jes HOGH
7.5.66. Fenerbahce (Tur). 20 caps. (1 goal).
Successor as libero to Lars Olsen, and has consolidated his place in the side with consistent performances in qualifying. Impressed this season in the Turkish League with his technical and skilful style. Quiet man off the pitch, but strong on it.

Jacob KJELDBJERG
21.10.69. Chelsea (Eng). 14 caps.

Jacob LAURSEN
6.10.71. Silkeborg. 12 caps (1 goal).
Plays wing-back for country, but in central defence for Silkeborg, whom he captained to the 1994 Danish title. Versatile player who began his career as a midfielder, but was switched to defence by Silkeborg coach Bo Johansson – the man who replaces Richard Moller Nielsen after Euro 96.

Lars OLSEN
2.2.61. Brondby. 86 caps. (4 goals).
Captain in 1992 who lifted the European Championship crown in Gothenburg. Hugely experienced libero with spells abroad at Trabzonspor, Seraing and Basel. Back home with Brondby this winter and likely to be used as cover for Jes Hogh.

Torben PIECHNIK
21.5.63. AGF Aarhus. 15 caps.
Played in the 1992 Final, but a subsequent move to Liverpool proved a disaster. Cost him two years of his career and a place in the national side until he returned to AGF. Now could be an experienced reserve this summer.

Marc RIEPER
5.6.68. West Ham Utd (Eng). 35 caps.
Created a modern-day Danish record of 31 straight appearances from October '92, and hopes to keep the run going through Euro 96. His strength and heading has improved considerably since his £1m move from Brondby to West Ham.

Jens RISAGER
9.4.71. Brondby. 9 caps.
Spotted playing in a minor friendly game by Danish legend Morten Olsen and brought to Brondby, where he has developed into a tough-tackling, no-nonsense defender. Now the club vice-captain.

Diego TUR
3.10.71. FC Copenhagen. 1 cap.
Immense youth talent, whose career was derailed when he broke a leg in the 1992 Danish Cup Final and missed the Barcelona Olympics. Made his international debut in the Kings Cup in Thailand, and has had a trial spell in England with Newcastle.

Midfielders

John JENSEN
3.5.65. Brondby. 69 caps (4 goals).
Scored a rare goal in the 1992 Final, after which he moved to Arsenal for £1.57m. The accurate figure reflects subsequent scandal over the transfer which led to manager George Graham's downfall for taking bungs. Jensen, who also had a spell at Hamburg, was a cult figure at Highbury, but recently returned to Brondby.

Henrik LARSEN
17.5.66. Lyngby. 38 caps (5 goals).
Scored both goals against Holland in the 1992 semi-final, but his career has faltered since. Spells at Pisa, Aston Villa and Waldof Mannheim have not worked out, and he is now back at Lyngby. Tough midfielder who could still be seen as a lucky pick for Euro 96.

Michael LAUDRUP
15.6.64. Real Madrid (Spa). 85 caps (34 goals).
See profile, previous page.

Christian LONSTRUP
4.4.71. FC Copenhagen. 2 caps.
Made impressive international debut in the Kings Cup in Thailand recently, after Michael Laudrup pulled out. Elegant playmaker in midfield who has been a late developer.

Allan NIELSEN
13.3.71. Brondby. 3 caps (1 goal).
Scored within 60 seconds of his debut as an international after going on as substitute against Armenia – a record? Went to Bayern Munich as a 17-year-old, but played only once. Now settled at Brondby, but foreign scouts are lining up again.

Michael SCHJONBERG
19.1.67. OB Odense. 13 caps (2 goals).
Trained as a fishing net repairer and now mends the broken soccer goal nets at OB. Had a spell at Hannover '96 where he scored the vital penalty shoot-out goal to win them the 1992 German Cup against Monchengladbach. A brewery gave him free beer for life.

Brian STEEN NIELSEN
28.12.68. OB Odense. 34 caps.
The 'grey man' of the team who rarely wins any plaudits but is the essential mopper-up of trouble in the team. Brief spell in Turkey at Fenerbahce, but best known for owning and cooking in his own pizzeria in home-town Vejle.

Claus THOMSEN
31.5.70. Ipswich Town (Eng). 3 caps.
Has emerged as Euro 96 candidate as move from AGF to Ipswich finally paid off after 18 months of hard work to overcome injury and build up strength. Clever on the ball, but temperament is still unsure for highest level.

Kim VILFORT
15.11.62. Brondby. 74 caps (14 goals).
Scored the second goal to clinch victory in 1992, having earlier gone home during the tournament to be with his sick daughter. Family reasons have kept this great talent in the Danish League apart from a brief early spell at Lille. Captain of Brondby and has played in all their European games, including the 1991 UEFA Cup semi-finals.

Brian Laudrup

Morten WIEGHORST
25.2.71. Dundee (Sco). 5 caps (2 goals).

Forwards

Mikkel BECK
12.5.73. Fortuna Koln (Ger). 6 caps (3 goals).
Scored on his debut against Finland last year, and his international form far outstrips that in the German Second Division with Fortuna. Sold there for only £25,000 from B1909.

Erik BO ANDERSEN
14.11.70. Rangers (Sco). 7 caps (1 goal).
Just moved to Rangers for £1.5m to link up with Brian Laudrup. Formerly at Danish champions Aab Aalborg, where he has been top scorer for the past two years.

Bent CHRISTENSEN
4.1.67. Compostela (Spa). 26 caps (8 goals).
Nicknamed 'Turbo' early in his career at Brondby for his lightning speed. Top scorer in the Danish league three times in four seasons from 1988-91, and played in some games in Euro 92. Moves to Schalke 04 and Olympiakos did not work out but a superb year at Spanish revelations Compostela has put him back in the frame for Denmark.

Brian LAUDRUP
22.2.69. Rangers (Sco). 60 caps (10 goals)
Major talent who has played for Brondby, Bayer Uerdingen, Bayern Munich, Fiorentina and Milan. Finally found a settled life in Glasgow, and was Player of the Year in Scotland in his first season. Three times the Danish Player of the Year. Younger brother of Michael, and son of 1960s international Finn. Dazzling dribbling skills and an eye for goal.

Peter RASMUSSEN
16.5.67. Aab Aalborg. 14 caps (2 goals)
Made his debut in 1989 against England, but has struggled to get into the side even with a two-year spell at VfB Stuttgart. Returned due to homesickness and formed a title-winning partnership with Bo Andersen at Aab.

Mark STRUDAL
29.4.68. Naetsved. 9 caps (3 goals).
Above information correct at 10.3.96.

FRANCE

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP RECORD
1960: Fourth place
1964: Quarter-finals
1968: Quarter-finals
1972, 1976, 1980: 1st round
1984: Champions
1988: 1st round
1992: Finals 1st round

HOW THEY QUALIFIED

7.9.94. – Bratislava (Att: 17,000)
SLOVAKIA 0
FRANCE 0
France: Lama – Angloma, Blanc, Roche, Di Meco, Djorkaeff (Lizarazu 81), Deschamps, Le Guen, Pedros (Dugarry 63), Cantona, Ginola.

8.10.94. – Saint Etienne (Att: 31,744)
FRANCE 0
ROMANIA 0
France: Lama – Angloma, Blanc, Roche, Lizarazu, Desailly, Karembeu, Pedros, Cantona, Loko (Dugarry 83), Ouedec (Zidane 71).

16.11.94. – Zabrze (Att: 21,000)
POLAND 0
FRANCE 0
France: Lama – Angloma, Roche, Blanc, Di Meco, Cantona, Karembeu*, Desailly, Pedros (Djorkaeff 31), Le Guen, Oudec (Dugarry 77). *Karembeu sent off, 49min.

13.12.94. – Trabzon, Turkey (Att: 4,000)
AZERBAIJAN 0
FRANCE 2 (Papin 24, Loko 55)
France: Lama – Angloma, Blanc, Roche, Di Meco – Desailly (Ferri 71), Cantona, Le Guen - Loko, Papin, Pedros (Martins 76).

29.3.95. – Ramat Gan (Att: 43,000)
ISRAEL 0
FRANCE 0
France: Lama – Angloma, Di Meco, Roche, Blanc, Le Guen, Loko, Desailly, Ouedec (Ginola 66), Martins (Djorkaeff 78), Pedros.

26.4.95. – Nantes (Att: 26,000)
FRANCE 4 (Kristofik og 27, Ginola 43, Blanc 57, Guerin 61)
SLOVAKIA 0
France: Lama – Angloma, Blanc, Roche, De Meco, Guerin, Deschamps, Desailly, Zidane (Djorkaeff 74), Ginola, Loko.

16.8.95. – Paris (Att: 40,426)
FRANCE 1 (Djorkaeff 86)
POLAND 1 (Juskowiak 35)
France: Lama – Angloma (Karembeu 66), Thuram, Leboeuf (Djorkaeff 70), Lizarazu, Deschamps, Zidane, Desailly, Guerin, Dugarry, Ginola (Pedros 64).

6.9.95. – Auxerre (Att: 15,000)
FRANCE 10 (Desailly 13, Djorkaeff 18, 79, Guerin 33, Pedros 49, Leboeuf 53, 70, Dugarry 66, Zidane 68, Cocard 90)
AZERBAIJAN 0
France: Lama – Angloma (Thuram 56), Lizarazu, Desailly, Leboeuf, Djorkaeff, Deschamps, Guerin, Dugarry (Cocard 68), Zidane, Pedros (Ginola 65).

11.10.95. – Bucharest (Att: 25,000)
ROMANIA 1 (Lacatus 51)
FRANCE 3 (Karembeu 28, Djorkaeff 42, Zidane 75)
France: Barthez – Angloma, Di Meco, Karembeu, Leboeuf, Guerin, Deschamps, Desailly, Djorkaeff (Lizarazu 74), Zidane (Thuram 83), Dugarry (Madar 62).

15.11.95. – Caen (Att: 21,500)
FRANCE 2 (Djorkaeff 69, Lizarazu 88)
ISRAEL 0
France: Lama – Angloma, Di Meco (Lizarazu 63), Karembeu (Keller 89), Leboeuf, Guerin, Deschamps, Desailly, Djorkaeff, Zidane, Madar (Loko 63).

Final Table – Group 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Romania	10	6	3	1	18	9	21
France	**10**	**5**	**5**	**0**	**22**	**2**	**20**
Slovakia	10	4	2	4	14	18	14
Poland	10	3	4	3	14	12	13
Israel	10	3	3	4	13	13	12
Azerbaijan	10	0	1	9	2	29	1

Talent to spare

Andre Duclos looks at the options open to the French

AN EMBARRASSMENT of riches is a phrase that seems particular apt just now for the French squad and eventual team which Aime Jacquet will be bringing to England in June. How many other countries could afford the luxury of leaving out such stars as David Ginola and Eric Cantona?

At the time of writing, it looks as if Cantona will at least get a place in the squad, though it has been made clear to him that he must not automatically expect a place in the team. As for Ginola, Jacquet has publicly declared exasperation with his various utterances and changes of mood.

The point is that, in the absence of these two unquestionably gifted and exceptional players, France has discovered others, well capable of doing the job. On the left flank, for example, where Ginola now plays, despite his right-footedness, for Newcastle United, there are two claimants; depending on what tactics Jacquet wishes to adopt.

If they are somewhat defensive, then he has the Paris Saint Germain midfielder, Guerin, who enjoys playing for France more than for his club because he has a freer hand to go forward.

But when that classical left winger, Reynald Pedros of Nantes, came in at Nimes in the friendly against Greece in February, he not only did extremely well, but combined sweetly with Bordeaux's outstanding Zidane.

Jacquet was extremely pleased with him, not least because he was persuaded to make an adjustment to his normal game, holding back from using his speed at once, in a somewhat slower build-up.

We know, of course, what an excellent duo Zidane has formed with Youri Djorkaeff, whom he replaced in the second half against Greece, so that the partnership was for once broken, splendidly though it had been working in previous games.

You can be pretty sure that Jacquet will resurrect it in England. As an able and flexible tactician – who has silenced all those noisy critics who blemished his early reign – he is happy to switch team and tactics according to venue and opposition.

"The French player," he says, "needs to be up against it to surpass himself. If not, he often has the tendency to be self-satisfied with what he has accomplished. I'd like to see him more incisive, still more enterprising." So he was pleased, perversely enough, to see a French team fall behind to the Greeks in Nimes then pick themselves up for a comfortable 3-1 win.

Goodness knows he has plenty of talent to call on, not least that now playing in Italy. Marcel Desailly gets better and better, a rock in central midfield for both Milan and France, but more than a merely destructive player; one ready to surge forward, and capable of finding his man shrewdly and well.

Also in Italy, and most successfully, is Jocelyn Angloma, an attacking full-back for France, but with Torino an influential, driving midfielder. He may well go to a richer Italian club in the close season, but he is bound to be a major force in England come June.

Christian Karembeu made a dazzling start in Genoa with Sampdoria, since when his form has been somewhat erratic, but with France his versatility is a great plus. Centre-back, midfield . . . or even right-back, where Jacquet has deployed him with success.

What we and his players do know is that Jacquet is highly innovative. As he says: "One must mistrust too much stability; you fall quickly in a routine. You must change, find something new, to spark off a reaction."

So in the Greek game he did not hesitate to give a chance to Sabri Lamouchi of Bordeaux. Lamouchi was adequate rather than outstanding, but had more shots at goal than any other player. Two Monaco men figured in the defence. Lilian Thuram is much coveted in Italy, where he so nearly went last summer. But Emmanuel Petit may have felt he had breathed his last in the national team.

He was unlucky to be playing left-back when Kostadinov, the powerful Bulgarian, scored those two devastating goals at Parc des Princes, and put France out of the 1994 World Cup. Petit did have a game in May 1994, in Japan, but that was the last time. Though, as he said, he did not get the stick meted out to the unfortunate Ginola, blamed bitterly for giving the ball away before Kostadinov got that crucial and eliminating goal.

Petit had a reasonable game before giving way to an attacker, Cyrille Pouget of Metz, who had only 13 minutes to assert himself.

Seven minutes earlier, midfielder Pierre Laigle of Lens was given his chance. But the man who returned to make a formidable impression was Patrice Loko, who looked as if he might be lost to the game after his bizarre excesses in Paris last summer, when he went berserk outside a discotheque, was arrested, exposed himself to a female police inspector, and had charges to face.

Against Greece he got two goals in somewhat unaccustomed manner, one with his head, one from the penalty spot, taking the kick because Djorkaeff had left the field at half-time. There was no room for Loko's former partner in the Nantes attack, the greatly gifted Ouedec, who shortly afterwards was the bane of the Panathinaikos defence in the European Champions Cup.

Loko had not scored for ages, and says "An attacker who doesn't score always loses a bit of confidence," but now it is coming back. And he still runs unselfishly to assist the midfield.

He is bound to be in the squad, even if he would prefer to have another attacker by his side, rather than be the solitary striker.

Meanwhile, Djorkaeff and Zidane had dovetailed superbly. No doubt Zidane wished recently that he had Djorkaeff with him when he found the going hard playing for Bordeaux in the UEFA Cup against Milan.

If Zidane is a superb dribbler who can carry the ball with such pace, skill and success, Djorkaeff has turned into an expert finisher, so much so that his team mates have now nicknamed him The Snake. "I had this gift in me," he says, "but I didn't know it. I realised it when I was about 20.

"Before that, I thought above all about making other people score. To give the final pass, that's so noble. In my youth, I never thought about being the top scorer of my team."

Grenoble perceived that he could be a marksman and they persuaded him to play further upfield. Plenty of goals resulted in Division 2 for that team and later with Strasbourg, but when he moved up a division to Monaco, he found it quite hard at first to win a regular place. What helped him, he says, was training with that prince among marksmen, Jurgen Klinsmann.

"I loved his mentality. Previously, I trained twice a week in front of goal. With him, I did it every day. Out of every 10 balls, I converted seven or eight."

The Greek game suggested that Djorkaeff may need Zidane more than the other way round. But together they make a formidable pair. Not even Cantona is likely to break them up.

Zidane adores playing for France, above all with Djorkaeff, and hopes it will go on until after the 1998 World Cup. It's the equivalent, he says, to a charge of oxygen, even though he emphasises that two men can't make a team.

The last, triumphant time when France played Romania, winning in Bucharest, Karembeu, Deschamps and Guerin made up a formidable central trio. Against Portugal, admittedly a weakened Portugal, it was the combination of Djorkaeff and Zidane which did the damage.

Still, it's nice to have an embarrassment of riches.

'In the absence of two exceptional players [Cantona and Ginola], France has others, well capable of doing the job . . . When they last played Romania, Karembeu, Deschamps and Guerin made up a formidable central trio. Against Portugal, it was the combination of Djorkaeff and Zidane which did the damage'

KEY MAN: ZINEDINE ZIDANE

FEW PLAYERS can have made a more spectacular debut for France. A couple of years ago the French were a couple of goals down to the Czechs. On went Zidane; and in went two goals!

The first came after a dazzling dribble and burst, finished with a powerful left-foot shot from outside the box, though Zidane is a natural right-footer. The second was scored when he headed in Jocelyn Angloma's corner.

Now he has settled into a productive midfield partnership with Youri Djorkaeff. They seem to complement one another perfectly.

Even as a 14-year-old, Zidane was exceptional for his technique. Jean Varraud, a veteran scout for the Cannes club, was enraptured by it when he saw Zidane playing at that age in a trial game at Aix-en-Provence. "A unique touch of the ball!" he enthused.

Zidane, brought up in a tough quarter of Marseille, was overlooked by the local club, and Cannes signed him, as a shy teenager. Guy Lacombe, a former star, worked hard to improve Zidane's heading, and to see that he got into the game when his team did not have the ball. He's a big fellow, whose physique belies his skills.

Perhaps he is not a good a finisher as Djorkaeff, but he is much more of a playmaker. And at the age of only 23, we may not yet have seen the best of him. Now, at Bordeaux, he uses training sessions to practice his dribbling, but when it comes to an actual game, he never abuses his talents. Which, he says, "come from the streets of Marseille. I liked to do tricks with the ball."

But he doesn't ignore the physical side. The game, he says, grows more and more physical. "You've got to be tough in your duels. I've the advantage of being big and solid in my legs, but I must work to be less susceptible to knocks, to fall down less often."

He is always striving to improve.

THE COACH

Aime JACQUET
27.9.41.
Played in midfield for Lyon and Saint Etienne and twice for France though he was a steady league player rather than an international-class performer. Jacquet learned the coaching trade as pupil to masters such as Albert Batteux and Jean Snella, then developed his own reputation at Lyon, Bordeaux and Montpellier. He was appointed as France manager in January 1994 as successor to Gerard Houllier, who resigned after the World Cup qualifying defeat by Bulgaria in Paris in November 1993.

THE PLAYERS

GOAKEEPERS

Fabien BARTHEZ
28.6.71. Monaco. 2 caps.
Forced his way into Marseille's team in their 1992-93 Champions Cup-winning season. Stayed after their enforced relegation, but moved last summer to Monaco. Created his own fashion with his short-sleeved shirts.

Bernard LAMA
7.4.63. Paris Saint Germain. 25 caps.
Top-rated goalkeeper who succeeded long-serving international Joel Bats in goal at Paris SG. Born in Saint-Symphorien, Guyana, and was shuffled around by Lille, Metz, Brest and Lens before earning overdue recognition. Ex-national boss Gerard Houllier first called Lama into the national squad to the surprise exclusion of Bruno Martini in February 1993.

Bruno MARTINI
25.1.62. Montpellier. 30 caps.
Experienced keeper who made his France debut in a 2-1 friendly defeat by West Germany in August 1987. Top division debut in 1983 and played for Nancy and Auxerre before Montpellier. Played in the French team who won the 1988 European Under-21 championship.

DEFENDERS

Jocelyn ANGLOMA
7.8.65. Torino (Ita). 31 caps.
Former Under-21 international who joined Torino in 1994 as part of the cash-raising clearance sale by Marseille following their enforced relegation to the Second Division. Played previously for Rennes, Lille and Paris Saint Germain. Originally an outside right, he earned Under-21 recognition after switching to right-back yet played on the right side of midfield in the Marseille team which beat Milan in the 1993 Champions Cup Final.

Laurent BLANC
19.11.65. Auxerre. 46 caps (8 goals).
Tall, dominating, sweeper or occasional midfielder who was 1990 Footballer of the Year in France. Made his name with Montpellier where he was even once their 14-goal top scorer. Joined Napoli for £850,000 after Euro 92 but stayed little more than a year. Returned to France first on loan with Nimes then to Saint Etienne, before moving on to title-chasing Auxerre last summer.

Eric DI MECO
7.9.63. Monaco. 19 caps.
Thoughtful footballer both on and off the pitch – an international since August 1989 and last year was elected as a Marseille city councillor. Played for Nancy and Martigues before making his name with Marseille, for whom he played in two Champions Cup Finals.

Frank LEBOEUF
22.1.68. Strasbourg. 7 caps (2 goals).
Late-developer who made his France debut in a 0-0 draw with Norway last July. Top division debut for Laval in 1988; transferred to Strasbourg two years later.

Bixente LIZARAZU
9.12,.69. Bordeaux. 17 caps (1 goal).
Basque family background though he was French-born at St-Jean-de-Luz. A Bordeaux youth product who has been closely watched lately by Arsenal. Helped Bordeaux win promotion from the Second Division in 1992 and made his international debut the following November in a 2-1 win over Finland.

Emmanuel PETIT
22.9.70. Monaco. 15 caps.
Made an instant impact as a teenager with Monaco, with whom he was a French Cup Final runner-up aged 18 in 1989, only three months after his first-team debut. International debut in a 0-0 draw with Poland in August 1990.

Alain ROCHE
14.10.67. Paris Saint Germain. 21 caps (1 goal).
Made his debut in the French First Division with Bordeaux in November 1985. Transferred to Marseille in 1989 and was a member of the OM side who retained the League title in 1990. After only 12 months at the Stade Velodrome he signed for Auxerre than joined PSG in 1992. France debut against Yugoslavia in a Euro Championship qualifier seven years ago. Missed most of the first half of this season because of knee trouble.

Lilian THURAM
1.1.72. Monaco. 7 caps.
Quick-tackling and covering central defender who was booked just 12 minutes into his international debut in a 2-2 draw with the Czech Republic in August 1994.

MIDFIELDERS

Marcel DESAILLY
7.9.68. Milan (Ita). 20 caps (1 goal).
Born in Accra, Ghana, but made his initial steps in the game at Nantes under the then youth coach Jean-Claude Suaudeau. Played 164 League games for Nantes before moving to Marseille in 1992. He so impressed Milan, in helping Marseille beat them in the 1993 Champions Cup Final, that the Italian club snapped him up the following autumn. He capped a superb first season in Italy with a fine goal in the 1994 Champions Cup Final victory over Barcelona.

Didier DESCHAMPS
15.10.68. Juventus (Ita). 47 caps (3 goals).
Deschamps began with his home-town club of Bayonne and moved into the top French division with Nantes and Marseille. He was furious when Marseille loaned him briefly to rivals Bordeaux but his superb form in both the League and national team earned him a recall. He went on to captain the Marseille team team who won the Champions Cup amid controversy in 1993. Joined Juventus the following year and was midfield general of the team which won the Italian League title last season.

Youri DJORKAEFF
9.3.68. Paris Saint Germain. 15 caps (10 goals).
Son of Jean Djorkaeff, who played right back for France at the 1966 World Cup finals in England and advises his son off the pitch. Djorkaeff played for Grenoble, Strasbourg and Monaco before transferring to PSG last summer. He made his France debut in the infamous 3-2 defeat by Israel in the last World Cup qualifiers but survived to earn the accolade as 1995 Footballer of the Year from *L'Equipe*. Djorkaeff was the top division's leading scorer with 20 goals from midfield for Monaco in 1993-94.

Vincent GUERIN
22.11.65. Paris Saint Germain. 10 caps (2 goals).
Played for Brest, Matra Racing and Montpellier before joining Paris Saint Germain in 1992. With PSG he has won the French League in 1994 and the Cup in 1993 and 1995. Nominated as 1995 French Footballer of the Year by the magazine *France Football*. A member of the France side which won the European Under-21 title in 1992.

Christian Karembeu

Christian KAREMBEU
3.12.70. Sampdoria (Ita). 13 caps (1 goal).
Dashing midfielder or occasional central defender noted for his forthright views as well as his forthright play. After transferring to Sampdoria last year, his political views emerged when he staged an on-pitch protest against French nuclear tests in the Pacific – a region of particular concern to Karembeu since he hails from New Caledonia.

Pierre LAIGLE
12.9.70. Lens. 1 cap.
Made his debut in the recent 3-1 win over Greece. Lens youth product who has also played for France at B level.

Sabri LAMOUCHI
9.11.71. Auxerre. 2 caps.
Born of Tunisian parents but brought up in France. Began with Ales, joining Auxerre in 1994. Made his France senior debut in a 3-1 win over Portugal in January this year.

Paul LE GUEN
1.3.64. Paris Saint Germain. 17 caps.
Began with Brest, making his debut aged 20 while simultaneously completing an economics degree. Joined Nantes in 1989 then PSG in 1991 – helping his new club win a cup final against his old club in 1993.

Reynald PEDROS
10.10.71. Nantes. 16 caps (2 goals).
Appeared, at the end of last season, to be the most likely Nantes star to head for a more lucrative contract elsewhere. Instead Loko (Paris Saint Germain) and Karembeu (Sampdoria) left while Pedros was persuaded to stay amid media speculation that his reward was a new contract doubling his salary. Pedros was joint top of the French League 'assists' table last season with 10 decisive passes to his credit.

Zinedine ZIDANE
23.6.72. Bordeaux. 10 caps (5 goals).
See profile, previous page.

Eric CANTONA
24.5.66. Manchester Utd (Eng). 45 caps (20 goals).
Former captain who has not played for his country since January 1995. Considered the most gifted French player of his generation but his career has been marred by his own tempermental excesses – culminating in the famous assault on a hooligan spectator at Selhurst Park, London, in 1995. Born in Marseille, he played for Auxerre, Martigues, Marseille, Bordeaux and Montpellier before retiring temporarily then making a new beginning in England with Leeds and Manchester United.

Christophe DUGARRY
24.3.72. Bordeaux. 8 caps 1 goal).
Under-21 international and a Bordeaux youth product who made his League debut at just 17. He made his senior France debut in a 1-0 win over Australia in May 1994 and became a squad regular in the absences of Cantona (suspension) and Jean-Pierre Papin (injury).

Patrice LOKO
6.2.70. Paris Saint Germain. 11 caps (4 goals).
One of the revelations of recent seasons and the French League's 22-goal leading scorer last term. A product of the highly-effective Nantes youth scouting network. Joined PSG last summer, then missed most of the first half of the season after suffering a minor nervous breakdown.

Nicolas OUEDEC
28.10.71. Nantes. 5 caps.
Loko's attacking partner in Nantes' championship-winning success of last season. A product of the famed Nantes youth system who made his League debut aged 17 against Metz. League top scorer with 20 goals in 1993-94.

Cyrille POUGET
6.12.72. Metz. 2 caps.
One of the stars of the Metz side which has emerged this season as a serious challenger for honours. Pouget is the youngest member of the current national squad.

Above information correct at 10.3.96.

ROMANIA

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP RECORD
1960: Quarter-finals
1964: 1st round
1968: 1st round
1972: Quarter-finals
1976: 1st round
1980: 1st round
1984: Finals 1st round
1988: 1st round
1992: 1st round

HOW THEY QUALIFIED

7.9.94. – Bucharest (Att: 10,000)
ROMANIA 3 (Belodedici 43, Petrescu 58, Raducioiu 88)
AZERBAIJAN 0
Romania: Stelea – Petrescu, Prodan, Belodedici, Lupescu (D Timofte 75), Popescu, Lacatus, Dumitrescu, Raducioiu, Munteanu, Selymes (Carstea 84).

8.10.94. – Saint-Etienne (Att: 31,744)
FRANCE 0
ROMANIA 0
Romania: Stelea – Petrescu, Belodedici, Prodan, Lupescu, Selymes, Popescu, D Timofte (Lacatus 71), Hagi, Dumitrescu, Raducioiu (Panduru 80).

12.11.94. – Bucharest (Att: 16,000)
ROMANIA 3 (Popescu 7, Hagi 46, Prodan 81)
SLOVAKIA 2 (Dubovsky 56, Chvila 78)
Romania: Stelea – Petrescu, Belodedici, Prodan, Popescu, Hagi, Lupescu, Dumitrescu, Munteanu, Raducioiu (Vladoiu 85), Lacatus (D Timofte 76).

14.12.94. – Tel Aviv (Att: 42,500)
ISRAEL 1 (Rosenthal 83)
ROMANIA 1 (Lacatus 70)
Romania: Stelea – Petrescu, Prodan, Belodedici, Lupescu, Popescu, Lacatus, Dumitrescu (Galca 73), Selymes, Hagi, Munteanu (Vladoiu 52).

29.3.95. – Bucharest (Att: 25,500)
ROMANIA 2 (Raducioiu 44, Wandzik og 55)
POLAND 1 (Juskowiak 42pen)
Romania: Stelea – Petrescu, Prodan, Belodedici, Selymes, Popescu, Lacatus (Lupu 46), Dumitrescu, Raducioiu, Hagi (Vladoiu 87), Munteanu.

26.4.95. – Trabzon, Turkey (Att: 1,000)
AZERBAIJAN 1 (Suleimanov 35)
ROMANIA 4 (Raducioiu 2, 69, 76, Dumitrescu 39)
Romania: Stelea (Prunea 88) – Petrescu, Prodan, Selymes, Belodedici, Munteanu (Lupu 70), Popescu (D Timofte 81), Lupescu, Dumitrescu, Lacatus, Raducioiu.

7.6.95. – Bucharest (Att: 28,000)
ROMANIA 2 (Lacatus 16, Munteanu 65)
ISRAEL 1 (Bercovitz 50)
Romania: Stelea – Petrescu, Belodedici, Prodan, Selymes, Lupu (Panduru 86), Munteanu, Lupescu, Dumitrescu (Vladoiu 67), Lacatus, Raducioiu*. *Raducioiu sent off, 67min.*

6.9.95. – Zabrze (Att: 19,000)
POLAND 0
ROMANIA 0
Romania: Stelea – Petrescu, Prodan, Mihali, Lupescu, Popescu, Lacatus (I Timofte 85), Sabau, Vladoiu (Panduru 64), Munteanu (Galca 75), Selymes.

11.10.95. – Bucharest (Att: 25,000)
ROMANIA 1 (Lacatus 51)
FRANCE 3 (Karembeu 28, Djorkaeff 42, Zidane 75)
Romania: Stelea – Petrescu, Prodan, Mihali (Lupu 46), Lupescu, Popescu, Lacatus, Dumitrescu (Vladoiu 46), Selymes, Hagi (Panduru 62), Munteanu.

15.11.95. – Kosice (Att: 7,500)
SLOVAKIA 0
ROMANIA 2 (Hagi 68, Munteanu 83)
Romania: Stelea – Petrescu, Prodan, Dobos, Lupescu, Popescu, Lacatus (Dumitrescu 74), Selymes, Moldovan (I Timofte 87), Hagi (Panduru 84), Munteanu.

FINAL TABLE – GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Romania	**10**	**6**	**3**	**1**	**18**	**9**	**21**
France	10	5	5	0	22	2	20
Slovakia	10	4	2	4	14	18	14
Poland	10	3	4	3	14	12	13
Israel	10	3	3	4	13	13	12
Azerbaijan	10	0	1	9	2	29	1

Fading stars

Iordanescu's ageing World Cup heroes may have had their day, says Bob Vaughan

RATHER like their Bulgarian neighbours and rivals, who provide one of the opponents in Group B, Anghel Iordanescu and his team are saddled with great expectation at home after reaching the quarter-finals at World Cup USA and qualifying for Euro 96.

Theirs is not a good record in the European Championships but, like the World Cup, they were on board from the start, playing in the 1958 to 1960 first round, where they twice defeated Turkey.

Their old adversaries from Czechoslovakia, who were to reach the World Cup Final two years later in Chile, put an end to hopes of reaching the four-match final round in France, Masopust and Co winning 2-0 in Bucharest and 3-0 in Prague, and eventually taking third place against the hosts.

Since those early days when the might of England and Germany, among others, declined to participate, Romania have made little progress. In 1972 only a goal or two were lacking in the quarter-finals, where Hungary inched it to Belgium and a semi-final with the USSR after Romania had taken Group 1 on goal difference from Czechoslovakia.

Otherwise there has been but one appearance in a later round and then a highly disappointing last place in Group 2 in the finals in France 12 years ago. An opening draw with Spain was encouraging in Saint Etienne, but there followed narrow defeats by Germany in Lens and Portugal in Nantes which left the young Hagi's team bottom of their four-team section.

It was only the second time the finals had been staged in two groups of four, with semi-finals and a final, and Hagi, the one survivor from 1984, will not wish to be reminded of the outcome or how long ago it was that he made his first appearance on the top European stage.

It was in the German match that the future World Cup star was replaced at half-time by Zare as two Rudi Voller goals put the Germans through despite a Romanian rally and a Coras goal.

Almost 12 years to the day, on June 18 at Elland Road, the Romanian team, possibly again with Hagi, go in to their last group match with Spain, but they will be hoping it will not be their last.

What then are the chances of The General's troops making a real impact and moving on to the quarter-finals this summer? The answer is probably that the chances are not as good as they were of doing as well as they did in America! The team is older, its main actors are far flung across Europe and some are not in the best of form at present.

In the goalkeeping department, Iordanescu has the choice between Florin Prunea and the spectacular Bogdan Stelea, the former still blamed in some quarters for the Sweden equaliser which could be said to have cost the team a semi-final date in the USA. The much travelled star is now back in Bucharest and guarding champions Steaua Bucharest's nets.

Both Prunea and the third contender Tene have spent their careers in domestic football and on the big stage in June, Stelea may get the edge.

Whoever is chosen will have had little big match practice, given the state of the Romanian *A Divize* and the lack of top opposition engaged to date for friendly warm-ups.

France at St James' Park could hardly be a tougher start for the Romanians and they will be relying at the back on a return to the form which brought Miodrag Belodedici two European Cup winners medals. He will run the defence and get forward on the counter. Like Hagi he is now over the 30-year mark and no longer at the zenith of his career. His Spanish club, Villarreal, do not provide top competition each week and just being in the *Segunda Division* and turning out against the likes of the B Teams of Real Madrid, Barça and Bilbao is not ideal preparation for Euro 96.

The highly accomplished defender is, however, one of the senior supports on which the manager will build his team for England. But America may have been the time for the stars to shine in 1994; England may be the platform for a last spectacular show before they are extinguished or at least the older hands are allowed to fade.

In midfield, too, the Romanians are almost certain to rely on the stalwarts who have got them through to their third big-time finals in six years. The rear anchors, Prodan, Petrescu, Selymes and Lupescu total nearly 150 caps between them, without Belodedici's 45, and while they are not yet veterans, will they have the legs after draining league campaigns in Western Europe?

> **'The team is older, its main actors are far flung across Europe and some are not in the best of form . . . America may have been the time for the stars to shine; England may be the platform for a last spectacular show before the older hands are allowed to fade'**

Only Steaua's Prodan will have had much respite before the departure for County Durham. Barcelona's Popescu will have been thoroughly employed in Catalonia until close to the start of the tournament, while Munteanu continues to find his and, if possible, Toni Polster's feet in the Rhineland as Koln fight to avoid the drop to Bundesliga II.

Over Hagi, too, there must be a question mark about his form in his second spell in Spain. He has not been a regular in the Barcelona first team and there is the bizarre possibility of him opposing Belodedici in a reserve team match against Villarreal's firsts!

Certainly it can be of no comfort to Iordanescu to have such key players in so modest a league role, but perhaps it will be better that they are able to coast rather than be under the pressure to succeed in title races and cups such as Petrescu at Chelsea, Raducioiu at Espanyol or Popescu at Barça.

Not only will the manager's eye be on the Espanyol striker, usually at a distance, but he must assess whether Lacatus, a veteran of Italia 90, still has the legs to complement Raducioiu up front. The flying Steaua returnee with the pudding basin haircut will be 32 when the finals begin, a year older than Hagi.

If they are selected it will be their last chance of international competitive action. They have always had the nod from The General, while Gheorghe Craioveanu, now in the Basque Country, has not. It may be time to align him with Raducioiu. The former 'U' Craiova striker was a surprise omission throughout the World Cup in the USA but some good spring form could put him in the frame this time.

However, will Iordanescu be there to see him perform? Even a faction of the FRF, the FA in Bucharest, has criticised Iordanescu's presence in Bangkok at the Kings Cup with a largely reserve squad, despite winning the trophy, when scouting the form of the likely first choices and arranging pre-June friendlies would have been of greater importance.

Chances of setting up further warm-ups do appear to have been missed and there is but modest fare, especially for home fans, before the off. Bucharest has just the Cup Final and a match with the United Arab Emirates to look forward to before the team leaves for England.

There is little chance of more than a 50 per cent take-up of the 7,000 tickets allocated to Romanian fans. Nevertheless the faithful 3,000 expected to make the trip will no doubt make their voices heard at St James' Park and Elland Road.

But what will they get back in return for their economic sacrifices? Almost certainly the approach will be cautious in the France match at St James' Park. That is half the answer; the other half being avoiding defeat.

Game two against Bulgaria, also at Newcastle, could be the key. Neither can really fancy their chances against an in-form Spain, while France won the qualifier in Bucharest. The two Western European nations may be cynically content to draw the day after the Balkan tie, especially if they have respectively won their opening games on June 9 and 10 against Penev's and Iordanescu's sides.

The General still has time to get the mix right, but it will be a tough task to arrange some fixtures, gather the troops very often and convince the politicians at FA headquarters that he is on the right road. An early exit could see the beginning of the end of the veterans, new management and a new, younger, team come the World Cup opener with Lithuania on August 31 in Bucharest.

The chances of reaching France in 1998 from a group containing the Lithuanians, the Republic of Ireland, Iceland, Macedonia and Liechtenstein look promising. They do not look so good for Euro 96.

Anghel Iordanescu has too many fringe players, too few players who have been there before, a squad involved in important club football finales and a lack of opportunities to play together or even to meet regularly.

There is just a slight chance Gheorghe Hagi can polish up his magic lamp one more time in a country where Romanian footballers do not travel well. For the sake of the faithful 3,000 it is hoped he can.

They may not be taking their full seat allocation, but never before have so many travelled so far west to support the national team. They have never been able to afford it or allowed. Now a few can. They will not want to be let down.

KEY MAN: FLORIN RADUCIOIU

HAGI's 'executioner' first came to attention on the world stage at Italia 90 as a 20-year-old who had only made his international debut a couple of months before the Romanians began their finals campaign, their first for 20 seasons.

Four years on in the USA it was the scheming of the 'Balkan Maradona' and the speedy Raducioiu's finishing which had spectators off their seats in admiration.

The former Dinamo Bucharest striker returned to Italy, where, last season, on loan from Brescia, he failed to command a regular place in the Milan starting line-up. While it did not seemingly affect his performances for Romania, his unsettled time in Italy was a great disappointment for a man who made his debut in Dinamo's first team at the age of 16.

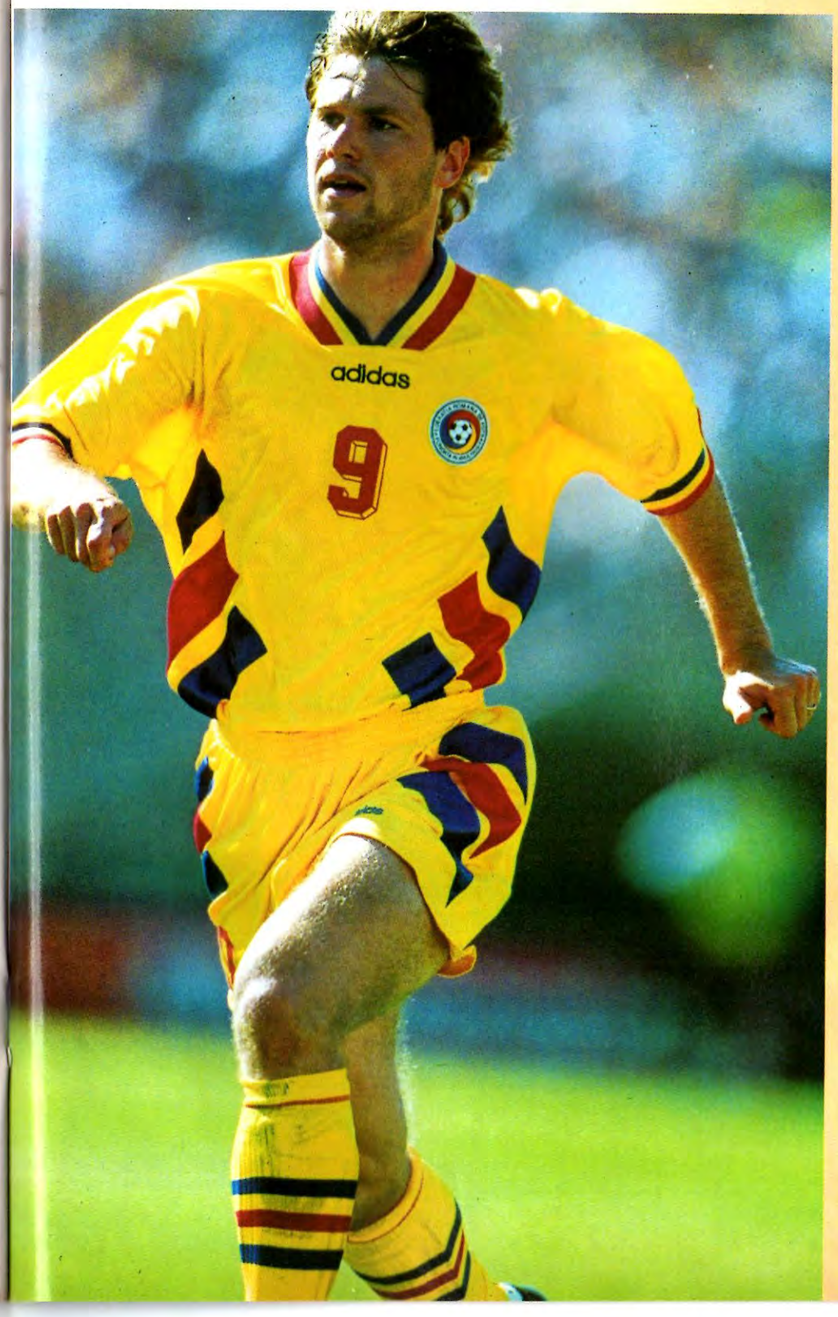
At 20 he was an international, in the 1990 World Cup squad, and by that autumn had joined Bari. Perhaps the move to *calcio* was premature, but a year at Verona followed before a better relationship developed at Brescia, the Romanian 'mafia' managed by Mircea Lucsescu and featuring Hagi, Sabau and Mataut.

The changes were forgotten when playing for the national side. His speed, skill and force have helped Romania to a European Championship finals after two World Cups in which Iordanescu's side have lost out in penalty shoot-outs.

His loan spell with Brescia ended last summer, when Espanyol came in for him. Now Raducioiu has shot the Catalonian club to fifth place in the Spanish League in his first season in Barcelona.

His goals, including three against Azerbaijan in Trabzon, Turkey, and his leadership have been a major contribution to the renewed success of Romania.

He was only 26 in March and remains young enough and quick enough to scare Group B opponents Spain, who now know him almost as well as Balkan neighbours Bulgaria.



THE COACH

Anghel IORDANESCU
4.3.50.
Succeeded Cornel Dinu in mid-1993 after spending most of his long and successful career with Steaua Bucharest. As a player he was capped 64 times for the national side, scoring 26 goals, and won four national League titles with his club. He was both assistant coach and substitute player when Steaua beat Barcelona in the 1986 Champions Cup Final. Between 1990 and 1992 he coached Cypriot team Anorthosis Famagusta before returning to Steaua. Took Romania to the quarter-finals of the 1994 World Cup. Known as 'The General' as he holds that rank in the Romanian army.

THE PLAYERS

GOALKEEPERS

Florin PRUNEA
8.8.68. Dinamo Bucharest. 28 caps.
Current first-choice keeper. International debut against San Marino in December 1990. Replaced Stelea for last three matches at USA 94. Joined Dinamo in 1992 having previously been with Univ. Cluj and Univ. Craiova, with whom he did the double in 1990-91.

Bogdan STELEA
5.12.67. Steaua Bucharest. 31 caps.
Much-travelled keeper back with Steaua after spells at Standard Liege, Rapid Vienna, Samsunspor, Mallorca and Dinamo Bucharest. Made his international debut in a World Cup qualifier against Bulgaria in May 1989.

Alexandru TENE
10.11.68. Rapid Bucharest. 3 caps.
Third-choice keeper not capped for three seasons. Romania debut against Mexico in Bucharest in August 1992. Previously with Flacara Moreni and Gloria Bistrita.

DEFENDERS

Miodrag BELODEDICI
20.5.64. Villareal (Spa). 45 caps (5 goals).
Experienced sweeper who was twice a European Champions Cup winner with Steaua Bucharest (1986) and Red Star Belgrade (1991). International debut against Norway in June 1986. Returned to national side in 1992 against Latvia after a three-and-a-half year absence after fleeing the Ceaucescu regime for Yugoslavia (Red Star Belgrade) and then Spain (Real Vallodolid, Valencia, and now Villareal).

Anton DOBOS
13.10.65. Steaua Bucharest. 5 caps.
Late developer – made his international debut against Israel in September 1993. In his third full season with Dinamo. Played in recent Kings Cup in Thailand.

Gheorghe MIHALI
9.12.65. Guingamp (Fra). 28 caps.
Currently in his first season abroad after leaving Dinamo Bucharest. Member of World Cup USA team but only played twice for Romania in 1994-95.

Corneliu PAPURA
5.9.73. Univ. Craiova. 10 caps.
Young defender who has spent his career to date with his home town's premier club. International debut against United States in Hong Kong in February 1994.

Dan PETRESCU
22.12.67. Chelsea (Eng). 49 caps (5 goals).
Former Steaua Bucharest captain and attacking rightback whose career in England has taken off since he moved to London from Sheffield Wednesday. Previously with Foggia and Genoa in Italy. Ever-present at USA 94. Missed the 1990 World Cup through injury. International debut against Italy in Sibiu in March 1989.

Gheorghe POPESCU
9.10.67. Barcelona (Spa). 60 caps (3 goals).
Outstanding libero who joined Barça for £3.2m last summer to replace Ronald Koeman. Four times Footballer of the Year (1990-1993) who was taken to England by then Tottenham manager Ossie Ardiles from PSV after 1994 World Cup, but fell from grace when Ardiles was replaced by Gerry Francis. International debut against Albania in September 1988. Spent five years with Univ. Craiova before going to PSV, who had failed to find a long-term replacement for . . . Ronald Koeman.

Daniel PRODAN
23.3.72. Steaua Bucharest. 31 caps (1 goal).
Central defender and title-winner with Steaua who made his international debut in the 5-2 defeat by the RCS in a World Cup qualifier in June 1993.

Tibor SELYMES
14.5.70. Cercle Bruges (Bel). 25 caps.
Runner-up with Dinamo Bucharest in 1992-93 before move to Belgium. International debut as a sub against Mexico in February 1993. Member of USA 94 World Cup team. Left-sided player who links up well with former Cercle Bruges team-mate Munteanu.

Midfielders

Iulian CHIRITA
2.2.67. Rapid Bucharest. 3 caps.

Constantin GALCA
8.3.72. Steaua Bucharest. 16 caps.

Gheorghe HAGI
5.2.65. Barcelona (Spa). 94 caps (27 goals).
Talented playmaker – dubbed the 'Balkan Maradona' – who had an outstanding 1994 World Cup but has found first-team opportunities at Barcelona limited since his move from Italy. A move to a new club is likely this summer. Romania debut way back in August 1983 against East Germany. Despite doubts about his match-fitness, he should become only the second Romanian, after Bolini, to win 100 caps. Previously with Constanta, Sportul Studentsec, Steaua Bucharest, Real Madrid and Brescia. Has already tasted success at Wembley – he won the Anglo-Italian Cup with Brescia.

Ioan LUPESCU
9.12.68. Bayer Leverkusen (Ger). 55 caps (5 goals).
Tall and commanding defensive midfielder who has made more than 150 Bundesliga appearances since his move from Admira Wacker (Austria) in 1990. A double winner in 1989-90 with Dinamo Bucharest. International debut against Israel in February 1988.

Dorin MATEUT
5.8.65. Dinamo Bucharest. 56 caps (10 goals).
Experienced international who made his Romania debut aged 18 against Algeria in February 1984.

Dorinel MUNTEANU
25.6.68. Koln (Ger). 43 caps (4 goals).
Talented left-sided player who can perform equally well in defence or midfield. Moved to Cercle Bruges in 1992 and was second in the 1993-94 Belgian Player of the Year poll. Played in all five of Romania's matches at USA 94. Moved to Germany last summer. International debut against Norway in May 1991.

Horia Radu NIKULESCU
2.3.75. FC National. 8 caps (1 goal).
On the fringes of the team – he made two substitute appearances in 1994-95. Previously with Univ. Craiova.

Nica PANDURU
11.7.70. Benfica (Por). 21 caps (1 goal).
In his first season abroad, in Portugal, having joined from Steaua last summer. Previously with CSM Resita.

Ovidiu SABAU
12.2.68. Brescia (Ita). 45 caps (8 goals).
Missed out on the World Cup USA 94 squad but scored on his return to the national side, against Turkey last February. Regular in Italy for three seasons. Romania debut in March 1988 against Israel.

Ovidiu STINGA
15.12.72. Salamanca (Spa). 11 caps.
Moved to Spain from Univ. Craiova last summer. Romania debut as a sub against Ecuador in January 1993.

Daniel TIMOFTE
1.10.67. Samsunspor (Tur). 22 caps (2 goals).
Missed the 1994 World Cup but returned to make five appearances in 1994-95. Previously with Dinamo Bucharest and Bayer Leverkusen.

Ion TIMOFTE
16.12.67. Boavista (Por). 10 caps (1 goal).
Dead-ball specialist with gifted left foot whose international appearances have been limited by Hagi. Won the Portuguese title with Benfica in 1993. Previously with Poli Timisoara.

Forwards

Gheorghe CRAIOVEANU
14.2.68. Real Sociedad (Spa). 6 caps.
Failed to make 1994 World Cup squad despite being the 1993-94 League top scorer with 22 goals for Univ. Craiova, for whom he played more than 120 League games. Moved to Spain last summer.

Gheorghe Hagi

Ilie DUMITRESCU
6.1.69. West Ham Utd (Eng). 54 caps (19 goals).
Outstanding individual display against Argentina in the 1994 World Cup confirmed his reputation as one of Romania's most talented players. Moved to Tottenham after USA 94, but failed to impress Gerry Francis following Ossie Ardiles' departure and was sent on loan to Sevilla in Spain. Move to West Ham recently went through after work permit problems. Captained Steaua Bucharest to Romanian championship in 1992-93. Lack of first-team action may have cost him his place in the starting line-up.

Adrian ILIE
20.4.74. Steaua Bucharest. 1 cap.
Young and, as yet, untested striker who has won three consecutive titles with Steaua. International debut against Israel in Spetember 1993.

Marius LACATUS
5.4.64. Steaua Bucharest. 74 caps (12 goals).
Speedy right-sided striker who is back in the national side following a foreign tour of duty in Italy (Fiorentina) and Spain (Real Oviedo). A surprise omission from 1994 World Cup squad but scorer of crucial goals in Euro 96 qualifiers. Has won full range of domestic honours with Steaua as well as the European Champions Cup and Supercup. Played in the 1990 World Cup.

Dinu MOLDOVAN
8.8.72. Neuchatel Xamax (Swi). 5 caps.
Moved to Switzerland last summer from Gloria Bistrita. Capped four times in 1993-94 season, but only once since then.

Florin RADUCIOIU
17.3.70. Espanyol (Spa). 36 caps (20 goals).
See profile, previous page.

Ion VLADOIU
5.11.68. Steaua Bucharest. 17 caps.
Sent home in disgrace from 1994 World Cup after red card against Switzerland and a behind-the-scenes row with coach Iordanescu, but regained his place in the national side after scoring feats for Steaua (16 goals last season). No goals as yet for national side.

Above information correct at 10.3.96.

RUSSIA

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP RECORD (AS USSR/CIS)
1960: Champions
1964: Runners-up
1968: Fourth place
1972: Runners-up
1976: Quarter-finals
1980, 1984: 1st round
1988: Runners-up
1992: Finals 1st round

HOW THEY QUALIFIED

12.10.94. – Moscow (Att: 20,000)
RUSSIA 4 (Karpin 42, Kolivanov 63, Nikiforov 64, Radchenko 66)
SAN MARINO 0
Russia: Cherchesov – Kulkov (Tetradze 65), Nikiforov, Tsimbalar (Kolivanov 55), Shalimov, Karpin, Onopko, Kanchelskis, Piatnitski, Radchenko, Kiriakov.

16.11.94. – Glasgow (Att: 31,254)
SCOTLAND 1 (Booth 19)
RUSSIA 1 (Radchenko 25)
Russia: Cherchesov – Kulkov, Nikiforov, Gorlukovikch, Shalimov, Karpin, Onopko, Kanchelskis, Piatnitski (Tetradze 71), Radchenko, Radimov.

29.3.95. – Moscow (Att: 27,500)
RUSSIA 0
SCOTLAND 0
Russia: Kharin – Khlestov, Nikiforov, Kovtun, Shalimov (Radimov 69), Karpin, Onopko, Kanchelskis, Dobrovolski, Radchenko (Pisarev 56), Kiriakov.

26.4.95. – Salonika (Att: 45,000)
GREECE 0
RUSSIA 3 (Nikiforov 36, Zagorakis og 78, Beschastnikh 79)
Russia: Kharin – Kulkov, Nikiforov, Kovtun, Khlestov, Karpin, Onopko, Piatnitski (Kiriakov 46), Dobrovolski, Radchenko (Mostovoi 77), Beschastnikh.

6.5.95. – Moscow (Att: 9,500)
RUSSIA 3 (Kechinov 53, Pisarev 72, Moukhamadiev 80)
FAROE ISLANDS 0
Russia: Cherchesov – Khlestov, Nikiforov, Kovtun, Tetradze, Kechinov, Onopko, Cherichev, Piatnitski (Lebed 22), Pisarev, Moukhamadiev.

7.6.95. – Serravalle (Att: 1,450)
SAN MARINO 0
RUSSIA 7 (Dobrovolski 20pen, Gobbi og 38, Kiriakov 48, Shalimov 49, Beschastnikh 59, Kolivanov 64, Chernishev 86)
Russia: Cherchesov – Kulkov, Tetradze, Kovtun, Shalimov, Karpin, Onopko, Kolivanov, Beschastnikh, Dobrovolski (Radchenko 60), Kiriakov (Chernishev 86).

16.8.95. – Helsinki (Att: 14,200)
FINLAND 0
RUSSIA 6 (Kulkov 32, 51, Karpin 42, Radchenko 42, Kolivanov, 67, 69)
Russia: Kharin (Cherchesov 72) – Nikiforov, Kovtun, Onopko, Khlestov, Karpin (Kanchelskis 60) , Mostovoi, Kulkov, Tsimbalar, Radchenko (Kiriakov 68), Kolivanov.

6.9.95. – Toftir (Att: 1,852)
FAROE ISLANDS 2 (H Jarnskor 12, T Jonsson 55)
RUSSIA 5 (Mostovoi 10, Kiriakov 60, Kolivanov 65, Tsimbalar 84, Shalimov 87)
Russia: Cherchesov – Kovtun, Nikiforov, Tsimbalar, Shalimov, Kanchelskis (Beschastnikh 57), Onopko, Kulkov (Mamedov 64), Mostovoi, Radchenko (Kiriakov 46), Kolivanov.

11.10.95. – Moscow (Att: 65,000)
RUSSIA 2 (Kovtun 36, Onopko 71)
GREECE 1 (Tsalouhides 64)
Russia: Kharin – Kovtun, Nikiforov, Tsimbalar (Radchenko 61), Khlestov, Karpin (Shalimov 76), Onopko, Kulkov, Mostovoi, Yuran (Kiriakov 46), Kolivanov.

15.11.95. – Moscow (Att: 3,500)
RUSSIA 3 (Radchenko 40, Kulkov 55, Kiriakov 70)
FINLAND 1 (Suominen 45)
Russia: Cherchesov – Mamedov (Dobrovolski 46), Nikiforov, Onopko, Khlestov, Karpin (Kanchelskis 77), Kulkov, Mostovoi, Tsimbalar, Radchenko (Kiriakov 70), Yuran.

Final Table – Group 8

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Russia	**10**	**8**	**2**	**0**	**34**	**5**	**26**
Scotland	10	7	2	1	19	3	23
Greece	10	6	0	4	23	9	18
Finland	10	5	0	5	18	18	15
Faroe Islands	10	2	0	8	10	35	6
San Marino	10	0	0	10	2	36	0

The friendly champions

Victor Gusev explains why June 16 is such an important date for the Russians

WORLD champions in friendly games. That is what local sports writers often call the Russian – formerly Soviet – national team.

A high percentage of victories in exhibition and even qualification matches usually keeps Russia among the top squads in FIFA rating lists. Rather misleadingly. For when it comes to European and World Cup finals the team often flop. For example, at the two major soccer tournaments of the 1990s, Euro 92 and the 1994 World Cup.

The 3-0 defeat by Scotland in Norrkoping and two frustrating games with Brazil and Sweden in America instantly erased memories of qualification successes.

This time Russia again surprised Europe by finishing well ahead in Group 8 of Euro 96. Although the group was evidently not among the strongest, the winners got the credit for setting two European qualification records: 34 goals in 10 games and the unprecedented goal difference of plus 29.

There were eight victories, with Greece, Finland, San Marino and the Faroes all being beaten home and away, and the only points dropped were in the two draws with Scotland, who finished second three points behind.

Russian fans hope that the streak of luck and victories will not stop in Manchester or Liverpool.

This is the first big European tournament for the Russian national team, whose history started after the break-up of the Soviet Union (Euro 92 featured the squad representing the Commonwealth of Independent States, not Russia). The draw, however, was not kind to the newcomer. Italy, Germany and the Czech Republic are the others in the toughest group this time.

Oleg Romansev, who had announced his retirement as the manager of Moscow Spartak to concentrate on the national team's preparations, got his squad together for the first training camp in February. Russia joined three other teams in a friendly tournament in Malta, beating the hosts 2-0, Iceland 3-0 and Slovenia 3-1.

Despite the victory, Romantsev drew not a very bright picture at the post-tournament conference in Moscow. Only the goalkeepers were up to the mark, he pointed out. "Both Cherchesov and Kharine are high-class professionals, which they proved again by their attitude and readiness."

The lack of top-quality defenders (Khlestov is out for no less than six months with his knee broken in two places) made Romantsev alternatively use Kanchelskis and Tetradze to cover the left-back area. He was not satisfied with their performance, however, and is still looking for a replacement.

Romantsev might have to start searching for a new right defenceman, too. Mamedov's groin injury looks serious.

If the situation remains so complicated, the manager will have to keep libero Nikiforov close to his own goal most of the time, which will surely affect Russia's firepower. Others are very cautious about using Kovtun, notorious for the number of red and yellow cards in his pack.

> ***'They play Italy in Liverpool on June 11, then face Germany in Manchester on June 16, the day of the crucial presidential elections at home, where Democrats and Communists face each other. The new president will be known by June 19, when Russia play the Czech Republic in their last Group C game'***

There can be hardly any complaints about the choice of midfielders and strikers. Even after Dobrovolski (who tried seven clubs in six countries in the past few years) announced his retirement and Kolyvanov got injured again, Russia still have a number of top-level players.

The problem, according to Romantsev, is that the majority of the attackers, like Beschastnykh, Shalimov and Kiriakov, have to spend most of the time on their clubs' reserve benches. "They are gradually acquiring the mentality of a reserve player, while you have to feel yourself a star to beat other stars in England," he points out.

Romantsev is especially critical about Yuran and Kulkov, who left Spartak for Millwall early this year. "With no real rivalry and impetus they lost their desire to play over a few weeks and gained lots of weight. I am also very sorry for Onopko, who now has to play for a team which is below his level," Romantsev says.

These three players (as well as Cherchesov) left Spartak Moscow quite unexpectedly right in the middle of the team's Champions League campaign. Romantsev claims that Spartak (despite huge UEFA bonuses) did not have money to keep them at home.

Romantsev had a different reason for leaving Spartak. "First of all," he says, "it will untie my hands and I will have enough time to watch other Russian teams as well as to go see our foreign-based players."

There are players, however, Romantsev will never want to see even with all the free time he has now.

Oleg Salenko, who scored a World Cup record of five goals in 1994 and is now playing in Turkey, should not even count on the manager's attention. The same is true for former Spartak defender Dmitri Popov, very noticeable in Spain today. Romantsev is known for his very strong personal dislikes.

This does not affect the atmosphere within the Russian team. For the majority of the players, coming to the national team training camp for five to eight days once in a while is like coming home.

The 1994 conflict (when the team split into two groups) is almost forgotten and players gladly fly in from England, France and Spain to speak their native language, see friends and generally enjoy each other's company. The good spirit is this time also supported by the Russian Football Association promise of "high European-level bonuses," (although the exact amount remains undisclosed).

Russia will play two friendly away games, in Qatar (May 26) and Poland (June 2) before the team fly to England.

They play Italy in Liverpool on June 11, then face Germany in Manchester on June 16, the day of the crucial presidential elections at home, where Democrats and Communists face each other. The new president's name will be known by June 19, when Russia play the Czech Republic in their last Group C game.

The Soviet Union won the first European Nations Cup in 1960 and were runners-up on three other occasions. The then national team manager, Konstantin Beskov, was fired in 1964 for failing to beat Spain in the final, although a place among the top three would be considered a big success today. That looks like a difficult target this time.

A new generation of Russian footballers is waiting. Will Romantsev let them in? Radimov and Simutenkov may well become the young stars of Euro 96, but they need a chance. Will Onopko and Kanchelskis finally prove that they are world-class players? Will Tsymbalar, Russia's 1995 Player of the Year, recover completely in time?

Russia is waiting for what is going to happen in June. The future is at stake. And I do not mean football alone.

KEY MAN: VICTOR ONOPKO

WHEN thieves were driving away Victor Onopko's Mitsubishi Pajero from under the windows of his Moscow apartment, they could hardly foresee the consequences. Not for themselves – they were never caught – but for him.

"It was the last drop which overfilled the cup," says Onopko, Russia's 1992 and 1993 Footballer of the Year. "Maybe my decision was too emotional, but that was when I told myself that it was time to leave, to go to where a man can feel secure for his family and his property."

Onopko left for Oviedo in Spain, after a brilliant season with Moscow Spartak. Although the team did not make it to the top of the Russian League for the first time in four years, they confidently qualified for the Champions Cup quarter-finals with six wins in six games. But without their captain, Spartak were never the same.

He was born in Ukraine and played for a number of clubs, including Dinamo Kiev B team and Shakhtyor, before moving to Moscow Spartak and winning national titles with them in 1992, 1993 and 1994.

After giving up his Ukrainian citizenship to be able to play for Russia, he made his international debut in May 1992 in a friendly against England, drawn 2-2. He became internationally known for his successful duel with Holland's Ruud Gullit in a Euro 92 draw, 0-0.

The 26-year-old Onopko is equally good as a libero, stopper or midfielder. He is Oleg Romantsev's favourite footballer and the only player the coach never criticised after his departure from Spartak. Romantsev's only concern was that his national team captain should have gone to a stronger club for more money.

Bayer Leverkusen, Eintracht, Newcastle, Everton and Atletico Madrid were mentioned among clubs who showed interest – but after the deal with Oviedo was already done.

THE COACH

Oleg ROMANTSEV
4.1.54.
A former international defender who played 10 times for the Soviet Union and was Spartak's left-back in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Had only third division coaching experience when he was appointed by Moscow Spartak in 1989. He won a hat-trick of Russian championships in 1992, 1993 and 1994 and was appointed Russian national manager, staying on at Spartak, in August 1994, succeeding Pavel Sadyrin. He resigned as Spartak coach in December to concentrate on the national job, but remains president of Spartak.

THE PLAYERS

GOALKEEPERS

Stanislav CHERCHESOV
2.9.63. FC Tirol (Aus). 34 caps.
Made his international debut in 1990 and was reserve to Kharine at Euro 92. Left Spartak for Dinamo Dresden in 1993 but returned to Moscow on a six-month loan in 1995. Played brilliantly for Spartak in the Champions League earlier this season, but failed to negotiate a new contract and unexpectedly left for Austria in January.

Dmitri KHARINE
16.8.68. Chelsea (Eng). 32 caps.
Made his Russian League debut with Moscow Torpedo aged 16. Played all three games for Russia at Euro 92 finals. Was sold by Moscow Dinamo to Chelsea in 1993.

Sergui OVCHINNIKOV
11.10.70. Moscow Lokomotiv. 2 caps.
Former youth and Under-21 international who has been voted the Russian League's top goalkeeper for two years in a row. Nicknamed The Boss for his impressive height (190cm) and weight (92kg). His superb reactions may well give him a chance of the No. 1 spot.

DEFENDERS

Igor CHUGAINOV
6.4.70. Moscow Lokomotiv. 6 caps.
Formerly of Moscow Torpedo, he played exceptionally well as a libero for Lokomotiv last season. Recalled to the national squad when Khlestov was injured.

Yuri KOVTUN
5.1.70. Moscow Dinamo. 12 caps.
Worst disciplinary record in the Russian League – five red cards and 28 cautions over the four seasons. Usually libero but may be moved to the wing if Nikiforov and Onopko take places in the centre of defence.

Ramiz MAMEDOV
21.06.72. Moscow Spartak. 7 caps.
Started out as a striker in Spartak's junior team. One of Spartak's top scorers in the 1996 pre-season indoor tournaments but missed key games with a groin injury.

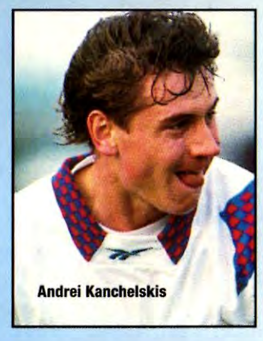
Yuri NIKIFOROV
16.9.70. Moscow Spartak. 26 caps (3 goals).
Became Under-16 European champion (as a forward) with USSR team in 1987. Pele then called him one of the world's most promising young strikers. Gave up his Ukrainian citizenship to be able to play for Russia. Has the strongest shot in the Russian League. Playing as a libero for Spartak, scored three goals in the Champions League games and nine in the Russian League last year to become the season's top-scoring defender. Voted Russia's sexiest footballer in a poll of female fans.

Omar TETRADZE
13.10.69. Spartak Vladikavkaz. 19 caps.
Greek by origin and has played for Tbilisi Dinamo, Moscow Dinamo and Moscow Spartak. Won the title with Vladikavkaz last season.

Midfielders

Dmitri ALENICHEV
20.10.72. Moscow Spartak. 2 caps (1 goal).
Made his international debut in February 1996 during a pre-season tournament in Malta. Impressive in 1995 Champions League.

Andrei KANCHELSKIS
23.1.69. Everton (Eng). 37 caps (4 goals).
Made his debut for the Soviet Union in 1989. After a short spell with Kiev Dinamo moved to Shakhtyor Donetsk in 1990. Was signed by Manchester United for £500,000. Scored 34 goals playing in England (a record for the foreign-based Russian footballers), including 14 last season. Missed the 1994 World Cup finals refusing, like Shalimov and a number of other top players, to play for Pavel Sadyrin. Joined Everton last year after a dispute with Man United manager Alex Ferguson. Shares his right wing place in midfield with Karpin.


Andrei Kanchelskis

Valeri KARPIN
2.2.69. Real Sociedad (Spa). 23 caps (4 goals).
Estonian who joined Moscow Spartak in 1990. Scored the first goal for the new Russian team – from a penalty after 61 minutes of a 2-0 win over Mexico in Moscow in August 1992. Joined Real from Spartak in the summer of 1994. Probably one of the most successful foreign-based Russian footballers ever. Plays as a right midfielder for the national squad, but prefers his centre midfield position with Sociedad.

Valeri KECHINOV
5.8.74. Moscow Spartak. 2 caps (1 goal).
Joined Spartak in 1994 from Paktakor Tashkent (Uzbekistan). Scored on his Russia debut in May 1995 against the Faroes. Scored two important goals as sub in Spartak's Champions League win over Rosenborg.

Vasili KULKOV
11.6.66. Millwall (Eng). 41 caps (5 goals).
Equally good as a midfielder or defender. Joined Moscow Spartak in 1989 and made his name playing sweeping in the Champions League side. Was sold to Benfica in 1992 and then joined Porto, winning national titles in 1994 and 1995. Returned to Spartak in summer of 1995, only to leave again early in 1996 for Millwall. Strongly criticised by national team manager Oleg Romantsev for this move to a lower league team.

Alexander MOSTOVOI
22.8.68. Strasbourg (Fra). 27 caps (6 goals).
Won 1989 USSR championship with Moscow Spartak. His fantastic goal in a League game in 1990 still remembered by local fans – he beat six Metallist players in their penalty area to score. Moved to Portugal, got married and divorced there while playing for Benfica. Initially joined other top players in their boycott of national manager Pavel Sadyrin, but later changed his mind and went to play in the 1994 World Cup.

Victor ONOPKO
14.10.69. Real Oviedo (Spa). 40 caps (2 goals).
See profile, previous page.

Vladislav RADIMOV
26.11.75. CSKA Moscow. 5 caps.
Originally from St Petersburg and came through the army club's youth system. Russia's most talented young player today. An Under-21 and youth international, he made his senior international debut at 18. Made 15 assists (the League record) in last year's Russian championship. Has a bad temper and often argues with referees.

Igor SHALIMOV
2.2. 69. Udinese (Ita). 40 caps (5 goals).
Won the USSR championship with Moscow Spartak in 1989 and was sold to Foggia in 1991 for £600,000. Foggia resold him to Internazionale in 1992 for £6million (a Russian record). Took part in 1990 World Cup and Euro 92, but missed the 1994 World Cup finals after refusing to play for Sadyrin. Played for Duisburg on a loan from Inter and then joined Lugano to beat Inter out of the UEFA Cup. Nicknamed Prince Igor by Italian fans, he returned to Italy last year where he plays as centre midfielder for Udinese.

Andrei TIKHANOV
16.10.70. Moscow Spartak. 2 caps.
Prolific striker recently turned into a left midfielder by Oleg Romantsev. One of the most important figures in Spartak's 1995 Champions League campaign. Joined Spartak four years ago from lower division Titan Reutovo. Made his international debut last February in a pre-season tournament in Malta.

Ilia TSIMBALAR
17.2.69. Moscow Spartak. 13 caps (3 goals).
Russia's 1995 Footballer of the Year. Originally from Odessa where he played for local SKA and Chernomorets. Joined Spartak in 1993 and, like Nikiforov, had to give up his Ukrainian citizenship to be able to play for Russia. Underwent a serious knee cartilage operation at the start of 1996, which ruined his pre-season training.

Oleg VERETENNIKOV
5.1.70. Rotor Volograd. 1 cap.
Russia's top scorer with 25 goals last season and scored the winner against Man United in this season's UEFA Cup. His transfer to Rotor from Uralmash Yekaterinburg in 1992 was almost stopped by the Siberian mafia.

Forwards

Vladimir BESCHASTNIKH
1.4.74. Werder Bremen (Ger). 13 caps (1 goal).
Scored two in one of his first games for Moscow Spartak – the 1992 USSR Cup Final v CSKA. Won two national titles with Spartak in 1993 and 1994.

Sergei KIRIAKOV
1.1.70. Karlsruhe (Ger). 29 caps (12 goals).
A fast and skilful winger with Dinamo Moscow who scored on his international debut for the Soviet Union against Poland in August 1989. Played in Euro 92 finals for Russia. Joined Karlsruhe in 1992, scoring 11 goals in his first season and nine in the second.

Igor KOLIVANOV
6.7.70. Foggia (Ita). 37 caps (6 goals).
Started playing for Moscow Dinamo at 18. USSR Footballer of the Year in 1991 and League top scorer with 18 goals. Having joined Foggia, was named the Italian League's best left midfielder in 1993-94. Was injured in October 1994 in Russia's game v San Marino, missed half a year and Foggia were relegated.

Dmitri RADCHENKO
2.12.70. La Coruna (Spa). 28 caps (9 goals).
Made a remarkable Champions Cup debut for Moscow Spartak scoring two in a quarter-final away game against Real Madrid in 1991. A national champion with Spartak in 1992 and 1993, and then joined Racing Santander. Scored 20 goals in his two seasons with Racing, including two in last year's 5-0 victory over Barcelona. Was transferred to La Coruna last summer. Had a bad start, but has since scored a number of important goals.

Igor SIMUTENKOV
3.4.73. Reggiana (Ita). 3 caps (3 goals).
League debut at 17 in 1991 for Dinamo Moscow. Russia's 1994 top scorer (22 goals) and footballer of the year. Joined Reggiana in November 1994. Made his international debut in August 1994 in a friendly against Austria (3-0) scoring from a penalty. Scored two more in 1996 pre-season tournament in Malta.

Sergei YURAN
11.6.69. Millwall (Eng). 20 caps (7 goals).
A USSR champion in 1990 with Kiev Dinamo. Was bought by Benfica for £1million in 1991. Later joined Porto (together with Kulkov) and won the Portuguese national title in 1994 and 1995. Was Euro 92 and World Cup 94 big disappointment. Gave up his Ukrainian citizenship to be able to play for Russia and joined Spartak Moscow (again with with Kulkov) in the summer of 1995. Left the team for Millwall after the season.

Above information correct at 1.1.96.

the footies
the IPC football awards

Winner ... Jurgen Klinsmann receives last year's International Player award from *WORLD SOCCER*'s David J Smith

We are offering *WORLD SOCCER* readers the chance to join a host of stars at Planet Hollywood in London on May 6 for IPC Magazines' second annual awards, the Footies.

Last year, Jurgen Klinsmann was a worthy winner of *WORLD SOCCER*'s award, the Best International Player in the UK. He was there, along with other star names such as Tony Yeboah and Matt Le Tissier to collect his award at Planet Hollywood.

Each award is voted for by readers of *WORLD SOCCER* and our sister magazines, *GOAL*, *90 Minutes*, *Shoot* and *Soccerstars*. This year is no exception. Fill in the form *(right)* and return to us by April 22 and you will be entered into the prize draw for the chance to win lunch for two at Planet Hollywood on May 6.

Alternatively, you can vote by phone on the Footies Hotline. Either way, it's your vote that counts.

The Footies Hotline 0891 368893

Calls cost: 39p per min cheap rate, 49p per min at all other times.
Average length of call to vote for all catagories: three minutes.

As well as the categories voted for by you, there will also be the following 'merit' awards

The Adidas Predator Golden Shoe Awards
Supported by PREDATOR TECHNOLOGY

The top league scorers in each division in England and Scotland

Fair Play Team Award
Supported by SNICKERS

The team with the best disciplinary record at the end of the season

the footies
the IPC football awards

Best International Player in the UK
The foreign player who has impressed most in Britain this season
Supported by WORLD SOCCER

Goal of the Year
The most spectacular strike of the season
Supported by 90minutes

The Footballer of the Year
The player who has shone in '95/'96
Supported by SHOOT

Gaffer of the Year
The top manager of the year
Supported by goal

Best Young Up and Coming Player
The brightest young player of the season
Supported by SOCCER STARS

Most Entertaining Footballer of the Season
The player who's excited you most
Supported by Planet Hollywood

Mr Nice Guy
For the footballer who has done most for the good image of the game
Sky Sports

The adidas Power Soccer Class Act of 1996
for the player who brings a spark of brilliance to brighten an otherwise dull game

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Get Voting!
Please fill in all the award categories and send to: The Footies, ***WORLD SOCCER*, IPC Magazines Ltd, King's Reach Tower, Stamford Street, London SE99 0BB.** Closing date for votes is Monday 22 April 1996. Alternatively, use The Footies Hotline to cast your votes and enter the competition to win lunch for two at Planet Hollywood. Telephone: 0891 368 893
Calls cost: 39p per min cheap rate, 49p per min at all other times
Thank you for your time and careful consideration

Slovakia

Double threat to Dragun

THERE was a quiet start to the Spring programme, with snow on the ground and late publication of the fixtures for the second half.

The cold and depth of snow suggested football might be impossible for weeks, but the show did go on, despite small crowds, with Slovan making the running.

The economic situation is bad and the fans have little spending money and more important preoccupations. Those who can afford the admission are likely to be attracted only to see Trnava, who refuse to let Slovan run away with the League by remaining just a point behind.

FC Kosice drew at Inter after a home defeat by Presov, which means they have little chance of challenging the top two.

At the bottom Prievidza are way behind and promoted Nitra, second bottom, have little to fear. Prievidza might well be relegated even if they do not finish in 12th place. There is a suspicion that matches may have been 'thrown' in the Autumn, and 15 players left during the break.

Former coach Anton Dragun has returned and taken over after failing at Slovan, and results have improved. Dragun says he needs time: Prievidza probably do not have it.

BOB VAUGHAN

Romania

Vladoiu goals prove vital

WITH two-thirds of the championship played, Steaua opened up a six-point lead with a 4-2 home win in the Bucharest derby against Dinamo, who slumped to fifth on the following weekend by drawing at Rapid.

Striker Ion Vladoiu is the leading scorer, so it should be full steam ahead for next year's Champions League, subject to any change of rules before the new season.

Rapid also may bar the way, trailing by only six points, and they recovered from a thrashing the previous week, against Farul, to hold the champions.

The former Progresul, now known as FC National, also are challenging for a UEFA place following wins in Llasi against Poli and at home to Timisoara.

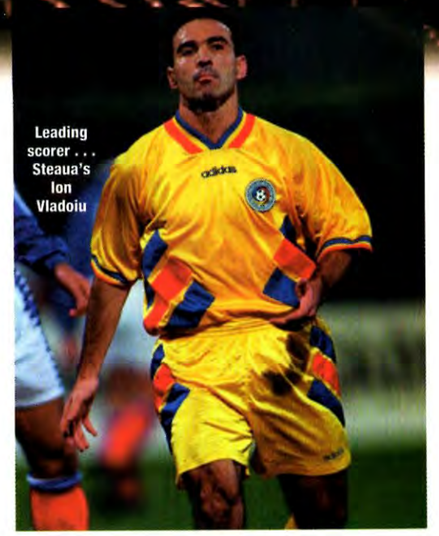
National team manager Anghel Iordanescu, criticised for the lack of high-quality warm-up games before Euro 96, will be hoping the title race is decided sooner rather than later, so that Steaua's men can rest and possibly attend whatever gatherings he can manage to put together.

The money must be on Steaua winning again, but the second weekend of May looks the earliest date by which domestic football's main competitions can be concluded.

For the future, as if the Federation have not enough to do ensuring the necessary administration is in hand for June, 'Divize A' will be reduced from 18 clubs to 16. Presidents of the first-class clubs plan to overturn this decision, which the Federation made in line with IFA and UEFA thinking. They have called a special meeting to discuss the matter.

There are some very worried Romanian presidents at present. Who would be a Balkan soccer administrator?

BOB VAUGHAN



Leading scorer . . . Steaua's Ion Vladoiu

Poland

Legia lose their chance

SNOW AND ICE disturbed the start of the season's second half, and possibly cost Legia Warsaw their chance of reaching the Champions Cup semi-final.

A 0-0 draw at home against Panathinaikos was followed by a 3-0 defeat in Greece, with two of the goals coming from Polish international Warzycha.

Juan Ramon Rocha, who coaches the Greek club, said he was delighted not to have conceded a goal in Poland, after Legia had lost their way on a surface of ice and mud.

Around 200 soldiers (Legia are an Army club) were used to get water off the pitch, after 78 tons of salt had been used to melt the ice. This did the trick, but left an unpleasant smell.

Legia coach Pawel Janas pointed out that his players lacked match practice, with the tie coming so soon after the mid-season break. Even so, the performance was disappointing.

Legia may not have the consolation of another championship, for although they lead by four points, Widzew Lodz have a game in hand.

The national team were thrashed 5-0 by Japan in Hong Kong during the annual Carlsberg Cup. They then struggled to beat a Hong Kong Select team 1-0, with Mariusz Srutwa scoring the winner, and lost 2-1 to Croatia in Rijeka, despite going in front through Henryk Baluszynski.

Kazimeirz Gorski, perhaps the best Polish coach ever, has been presented with a medal by President Kwasnieski to mark his 75th birthday. Gorski took Poland to Olympic gold in 1972 and silver in 1976, and to third place in the 1974 World Cup, after they had eliminated England in the qualifying competition.

DARIUSZ KUROSWKI

Slovenia

Family first

NATIONAL team coach Branko Oblak has quit, saying: "I can't stand it any more."

Oblak, a former Yugoslavian international, played for Olimpija and Hajduk and had spells in Germany with Schalke and Bayern. Now he says his players don't like to train and don't like to work at their game. "It's more important to me now to stay home, raise my daughter, and not ruin my nerves," he added.

The team manager, Dr Zdenko Verdenik, is carrying on alone for the time being.

The Gamblers from Gorica are almost certain to win the Slovenian League title with almost two months of the season to spare.

FC HIT Gorica, sponsored by the HIT hotel chain – which includes one of Europe's three biggest casinos – are financially sound, as is apparent by their buys in the transfer market.

They strengthened their team for the run-in by signing Blagoje Curcic from OKF Belgrade and Andrej Poljsak from FC Mura, although the latter had to go to court to get out of his contract with that club.

ZDRAVKO REIC

Bulgaria

Slavia still on a roll

AS INTEREST focused on the friendly clash with England at Wembley and Dimitar Penev whittled his pre-selection of 36 down to around 18, the country's oldest and best-loved club, Slavia Sofia, were continuing on a roll.

Their second 2-0 win in succession put them top, ahead of Levski, who faltered in Lovech and were held to a 1-1 draw by FC Leks. Third-placed Lok managed only a goalless draw at home to Botev Plovdiv, so the Sofia trio have all to play for as the season enters its last third. Leks, Shumen and Spartak Plovdiv are battling it out at the bottom.

Leading scorer Girogiev added one to his tally in Spartak Varna's 3-1 home win over fellow promotees Rakovski Ruse.

Varna are well placed in the top half of the table, but Ruse, who came up after finishing second in Division Two North and winning a play-off, are third from bottom and are facing a quick return to regional football.

A title for Slavia is long overdue. Their last was 53 years ago, though their cause was not helped by the Communist bosses' favourite, CDNA, who often took the best players. The man heading Slavia's challenge is Nasko Sirakov, nearly 34, who is in Dimitar Penev's notebook for Euro 96. With the help of Zoran Ristin in midfield, Sirakov scored six goals in the first four matches after the resumption.

Perhaps if goals flow this spring, Slavia can pull off their first League win since pre-Communist times.

BOB VAUGHAN

Hungary

Weather puts Cup on ice

THE last 16 in the Cup were reduced only by four. The weather was the victor as only four of the second legs could be completed.

Csepel and Vac managed at last to play their first leg. The Islanders came unstuck at home 1-0, so Vac could look to a quarter-final place. Definitely through were Ferencvaros, BVSC Dreher, Debrecen and Kispesti Honved. Fradi won 3-1 at home after a 2-0 victory at Salgotarjan; BVSC, who beat Vasas 4-1 at home, drew 3-3 in the return; Debrecen also qualified, with a 3-1 win over Stadler FC after a 1-0 victory at home; Honved had a more difficult time. After winning 1-0 in Budapest, they had to hang on for a 1-1 draw in Bekescsaba.

Dates for the quarter-finals were proving a problem, with four clubs still not known and the snow and cold also upsetting the League schedule.

In the European Under-21 Championship, quarter-final opponents Scotland, who cannot go to the Olympics whatever they do, were beaten 2-1 at the Ulloi Utca, but it was unlikely to be enough for Hungary to reach the semi-finals.

More importantly, perhaps, five countries qualify for the Olympics in Atlanta, the four semi-finalists and the best losing quarter-finalist.

The semi-finals will be played in the last week of May. In the event of Hungary overcoming Scotland, Spain or the Czech Republic would be the next opponents. Unless there is an exceptional result in the second legs of the quarter-finals, Hungary are almost certain to go through to Atlanta, due to the excellent performances in the qualifying rounds.

So there is hope on the horizon after the Euro 96 gloom and the elimination of Ferencvaros in the Champions League.

BOB VAUGHAN

Czech Republic

Slavia take on AS Roma at the Olympic Stadium

A triumph in Rome

Slavia Prague march into the UEFA Cup semi-finals at the expense of AS Roma

TURKEY and the Republic of Ireland are extras on national team manager Dusan Uhrin's list of warm-ups for Euro 96, but Slavia's name was on all lips as the second half of the season got going.

Not only were they topping the table, but they were accounting for AS Roma in the club's first European quarter-final.

There were 14,372 spectators for the first leg of their UEFA cup tie in the Rosticky Stadion, where the fixture had been moved as rebuilding continues in Vrsovice and seating capacity remains limited.

They had to wait only 11 minutes for international forward Poborsky to put the hosts ahead, and five minutes after the restart Vagner made it two. So Slavia went to Rome's Olympic Stadium with a good chance of making the semi-finals, and duly achieved that objective by holding their hosts to a 3-1 margin, with the away goal proving vital.

While Slavia are in their best period for years, things go from bad to worse across town on Letna Hill. Sparta are reportedly the small matter of 500million Czech crowns in debt.

President Petr Mach has not been literally shot at again, but is under fire from supporters and media. His intention appears to be to resign but he has not gone yet. Rescue may come in the form of foreign investment, but it had better be quick.

On the field things are no better, but at least Sparta took full points from Drnovice, 2-1, after being humbled 4-1 by Banik in Ostrava.

BOB VAUGHAN

Croatia

President steps in

Tudjman sorts out qualification dispute

THE NATIONAL team had two convincing victories in 15 days as part of their preparations for Euro 96.

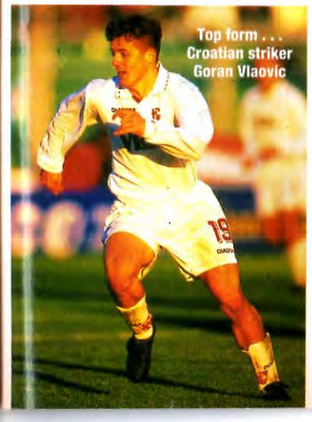
First they beat Poland 2-1 in Rijeka, and then they had a 3-0 victory over South Korea in Zagreb. Striker Goran Vlaovic, now with Padova, was in outstanding form.

The final member of the 'elite six' – the teams who will contest the national championship – has been decided after a one-off clash ordered by Croatia's President, Franjo Tudjman. He ruled that a match should be played between Mladost 127 and Hrvatski Dragovoljac, to settle a dispute between them.

Mladost, named after an army unit, claimed that Alen Mrzlecki was their player. Hrvatski, whose full name translates as 'Croatian Volunteer', claimed that he was theirs.

Both have some very influential supporters in political and military circles, and eventually Mr Tudjman – a strong soccer supporter – ordered the clubs should meet, on a neutral ground. Hrvatski won by the only goal.

ZDRAVKO REIC



Top form . . . Croatian striker Goran Vlaovic

Bosnia-Hercegovina

Divided over division

THE composition of the proposed unified Bosnian-Hercegovinian League is causing problems between Croats and Muslims.

At present both groups run their own leagues, the Croats with 40 teams in four groups – the top four playing off for the title – and the Muslims with one 16-club division.

Both sides have agreed on a unified 18-club set-up, but they cannot decide on how many teams each should have. The Croats want at least six places, while the Muslims insist on having 16. Discussions are likely to continue for some time.

At least football is being played, as proof that people are starting to live normally again. A 0-0 draw between Zenica and Celik in the Muslim League attracted a crowd of 18,000. Unfortunately, Velez Mostar, former European competitors, have fallen on hard times, and recently lost 12-1 to Lukavac.

ZDRAVKO REIC

Zagalo leads push for Atlanta

No go . . . Brazil's Narciso stops Gustavo Lopez of Argentina

BRAZIL and Argentina – two countries which have never won the Olympic Games – qualified for Atlanta in the South American tournament held in Mar del Plata, Argentina.

Both fielded players with ample First Division experience, so the outcome was never in doubt.

Brazil, winners of this tournament for the sixth time out of the 10 occasions it has been held since 1960 (and never on their own turf), had four players from abroad – Juninho (Middlesbrough), Roberto Carlos and Caio (Internazionale) and Arilson (Kaiserslautern), although the latter suddenly disappeared and returned to Germany when he found he was not being picked.

They also had an excellent run-up to this Under-23 tournament, facing full international teams such as in the Gold Cup (the CONCACAF national championship) earlier this year, and reaching the final into the bargain.

They were one of four teams under their full national team coach, in their case wise old Mario Zagalo, 72, for whom the Olympic Games are an absolute priority. Brazil do not have to qualify for the next World Cup this year, as the other nine countries have to do.

Argentina did not include any exiles, but national team coach Daniel Passarella had plenty of First Division talent at his disposal – plus home advantage. They played some very good soccer and might well have won the tournament.

When Argentina and Brazil met on the last day in the deciding match of the final round, they played the best soccer of the tournament in front of a packed stadium. Argentina led 2-0 halfway through the second half, were outplaying their rivals, and creating chance after chance. But Juninho suddenly became a power and two quick attacks brought two goals in two minutes to earn a 2-2 draw, which gave the title to Brazil on goal difference. Both teams remained unbeaten in seven games.

Several other countries were refused permission to use their players from abroad or just did not try.

Brazil's World Cup coach Carlos Alberto Parreira was one of the first to praise Zagalo's work with the Olympic side. Parreira, now coach of Fenerbahce in Turkey, said: "Mario Zagalo has done a perfect job in giving Brazil some new zest. There's no doubt in my mind Brazil will come back from Atlanta with their first Olympic gold."

Parreira also said that he thought Bebeto, Aldair and Dunga should be used as the three over-age players in Atlanta. "Aldair is a brick wall in front of the goalkeeper, captain Dunga will instil the fighting spirit and Bebeto can score the necessary goals," he said.

Pre-tournament speculation was that Uruguay and Colombia or Paraguay would make up the final four. But Colombia, still with many ageing stars in their senior team, showed that they had few new stars and appeared not to give this tournament much importance, although they qualified last time.

Paraguay – who also qualified in 1992 – once again changed their training staff shortly before the tournament, and naming three coaches plus a goalkeeping coach did not help.

The scouts were out in force in Mar del Plata. They saw much new talent, including Pedro Sarabia (Paraguayan defender), Matias Almayda (Argentinian half), Federico Magallanes (Uruguay's undisciplined striker), Marcelo Delgado (Argentinian striker who finished top scorer with eight goals), Ze Maria (Brazil's flank defender), Rafael Dudamel (Venezuela's goalkeeper), Claudio Lopez (Argentinian striker) and Chile's Sebastian Rozental and Marcelo Salas.

One other point: while officials were discussing the idea of larger goals, the tournament produced 102 goals in 26 games at an average of just under four per game.

ERIC WEIL

THE CONMEBOL Congress held in Mar del Plata during the Olympic qualifying tournament re-selected Paraguay's Nicolas Leoz as president (until 2002) and Argentinian FA chief, Julio Grondona, as FIFA representative (and thus a vice-president of the international body until 2000).

BEACH SOCCER came to Buenos Aires in the form of a challenge match between Argentina and world champions Brazil at the sandy cattle show ground. Brazil won 12-5, their 25th straight unbeaten game.

Inter-American Cup

Viva Velez Sarsfield again

VELEZ SARSFIELD, the current Argentinian national champions, have added another trophy to their collection.

They beat Costa Rica's Cartagines 2-0 (0-0, 2-0) for the Inter-American Cup, which is contested between the winners of the Libertadores Cup (the South American club championship) and the CONCACAF club champions – in this case the 1994 winners of both competitions.

Velez, one of the best South American teams over the past three years – during which time their line-up has hardly changed – never had to go all out for this victory, but nevertheless met tough opposition from a less experienced but disciplined team.

South American clubs have now won the trophy 13 times against three times (all by Mexican clubs) for those from the Central, North American and Caribbean zone.

This trophy was first contested in 1968. As it is semi-official, eligible clubs are left to arrange meetings among themselves and this is not always done.

One club on the list of winners have never won the Libertadores Cup – Chile's Universidad Catolica, who replaced Sao Paulo when the latter withdrew from the 1993 match.

From South America, five Argentinian clubs have won it (Independiente in 1972, 1973 and 1975, Estudiantes de La Plata 1968, Argentinos Juniors 1985, River Plate 1986, Velez Sarsfield 1994); two from Uruguay (Nacional 1971 and 1988); two from Chile (Colo Colo 1992, Universidad Catolica 1993); one from Colombia (Nacional 1989); and one from Paraguay (Olimpia 1979).

The three CONCACAF winners are America 1977 and 1990 and UNAM 1980.

ERIC WEIL

Uruguay

Sud find a helper

THE championship has not started in Uruguay, but a club who might not even be able to take part have made the news.

Sud America, a modest Montevideo club, won promotion to the First Division at the end of 1994 and held their own in mid-table in 1995, but owed their players around $400,000 – which would have meant they would not be able to start the 1996 championship.

A Uruguayan FA rule forbids clubs to play if they owe their players any money.

But then along came Diego Maradona, in the form of a firm he owns, to negotiate taking over the professional soccer section of the club for five years with an option on another five, in exchange for paying off the club's debts.

With the agreement signed, Carlos Fren – who accompanied Diego as coach at Mandiyu and later at Racing Club – took over as coach of Sud America and several Argentinian players may be joining the team, too.

ERIC WEIL

Chile

Big Three to the fore

THE 'big three' are ahead again in the Chilean First Division opening championship, in which the 16 clubs are split into four groups with the top two advancing to the next stage.

Universidad Catolica, Colo Colo and the champions, Universidad de Chile, all head their respective groups. Colo Colo have signed nine new players, but being cash-strapped there were no really expensive buys. Among the purchases were Brazilian ex-Sao Paulo midfielder Emerson Pereira Da Silva, an Under-23 international, and Argentinian striker Marcelo Barticciotto – not so long ago named top player in the League.

Universidad Catolica sold Argentinians Nestor Gorosito (midfield) and Alberto Acosta (striker) to Yokohama Marinos for close on $7m, then spent about $1.32m on replacements Daniel Garnero, a midfielder from Independiente (Argentina), and Cate, a striker and Brazilian Under-23 international from Sao Paulo.

ERIC WEIL

World Cup high noon

Altitude row mars the big build-up to the France 98 qualifiers

NINE South American countries – all except Brazil, who qualify as holders – will play each other home and away in a league format, with the top four going to the 1998 World Cup finals in France.

There is no doubt that this is the fairest method, but that is not the reason for its 'invention'. The main reason is to generate more revenue from more matches – 72 spread over 19 months – mainly from TV.

Towards the end there are sure to be a number of 'dead' matches involving teams already qualified or with no chance of doing so.

But conflict has overshadowed the build-up to the April 24 start of the qualifying tournament, following a recommendation from FIFA's medical commission that no games should be played at over 2,500 metres above sea level. This would cut out three much-used venues – La Paz (Bolivia) at 3,580 metres, Bogota (Colombia) at 2,640 metres, and Quito (Ecuador) at 2,800 metres – which have held World Cup and other tournament matches in the past.

The commission was said to have made the recommendation in view of the change of format to the qualifying competition, and "originally received pressure from South America". From whom?

FIFA then left it to CONMEBOL to decide and the latter wanted to cut out La Paz as a venue. But as a result of Bolivia's pressure through diplomatic and political channels to reverse the judgment – even French president Jacques Chirac said he supported them – it is now up to FIFA again to decide on the matter, at the end of May.

Both Ecuador and Colombia have home games scheduled before then and say they will play in Quito and Bogota respectively.

What with the hot summer recess and the continent's Olympic qualifying tournament from February 18 to March 6, in which quite a number of present and future senior internationals took part, no country has announced squads for the World Cup campaign.

Argentina and Uruguay are firm favourites for qualifying places, and Chile and Paraguay might take the other two, based on recent form. But 19 months is a long time and fortunes are likely to fluctuate.

As Argentina's coach, Daniel Passarella, said in an interview, South American soccer has levelled off at international level mainly because the stronger countries have the majority of their first-teamers playing abroad and will have less time to train with their complete squads. He was referring to his own team, but Uruguay are in the same boat.

Since Passarella took over in October 1994 he has tried 52 players in 37 tournament and friendly full internationals and he has a 26-7-4 record (goals 82-22). He says of the new qualifying system: "I would have preferred the former idea – in two groups with a maximum of eight games in two months instead of 16 spread over almost two years – to be able to have all the players concentrated several weeks beforehand.

"I signed a contract and will comply with it. But I don't think I'll continue after the World Cup."

Under FIFA rules, clubs are obliged to release their players for World Cup qualifying games seven times a year, five days in advance. This year each country will play six or seven games, but next year, in the vital stages, it will be 10 or 11.

Uruguay will be without their kingpin, Enzo Francescoli, who did so much in helping them to win the South American Championship last year. At 34, he still stands out for River Plate in Argentina, but he says he has retired from international soccer.

Less than a year ago Colombia could have been confident of a qualifying place, but now their chances do not look so good. They were the first country to pick a preliminary squad – with Rene Higuita, Alexis Mendoza, Carlos Valderrama and Leonel Alvarez among several veterans. Buy a poor showing in the Olympic qualifying tournament – in which they failed to win a game and even lost to Venezuela – showed they had no new stars coming through.

Paraguay have just engaged Brazilian Paulo Cesar Carpeggiani as coach. He formerly coached Paraguay's big club, Cerro Porteno, and is one of six foreign coaches among the nine countries.

Jose Luis Chilavert – voted the world's top goalkeeper by the IFFHS – has agreed to return to the national team. He will reportedly be paid $150,000 per match, but do not expect him to keep the opposition out on his own.

Paraguay also have a number of other players abroad, but mostly in South America and should have no trouble in getting them.

Chile have some good players and the FA thinks the team should be getting better results. There is strong pressure to dismiss Spanish coach Xavier Azkargorta, who had much more success in Bolivia until last year.

Another Spaniard, Rafael Santana, is in charge of Venezuela, one of only four teams who have played this year, registering three 0-0 draws.

The good performance of their Under-23s in the Olympic qualifying tournament – where they surprisingly reached the final round for the first time in any competition – has certainly given them a lift, and they may not be the usual push-overs.

Soccer is only fourth in popularity in Venezuela after baseball, basketball and boxing, but things are changing.

ERIC WEIL

MEN IN THE NEWS

Waiting for the judge

DIEGO MARADONA's lawyers lodged yet another appeal to have a possible jail sentence – for shooting at journalists with an air rifle – commuted to probation.

The prosecution, requesting a four-year sentence, refused to accept a deal, and the judge is due to give his verdict shortly.

Maradona, who was reported to have received $7.2m to use Puma boots for two years, went into a rest clinic belonging to the Adventist Church 10 days before the start of the national closing championship in Argentina.

He had hardly trained with the Boca Juniors squad and rarely played in friendly tournaments during the close season.

PELE, now 55, took part in an exhibition match played at the opening of the new youth training camp of his former club, Santos, and scored two goals – one a penalty. His son Edinho, who is the Santos first team goalkeeper, did not want to oppose his father, so he played as a forward instead.

ALTAIR RAMOS, a trainer with Sao Paulo in Brazil, was struck by lightning during training and had to be given the kiss of life by a TV reporter before being taken to an intensive care unit, where he is now recovering.

TEOFILO CUBILLAS, outstanding playmaker for Peru in the 70s, has been working as a commentator at the South American Olympic qualifying tournament in Argentina.

He now lives in Fort Lauderdale in the USA where he played for the Strikers in the 80s, and is active in promoting the game in the area.

JOSE LUIS CALDERON, leading scorer in Argentina's national opening championship, has moved from Estudiantes de La Plata to Independiente for $600,000.

WALTER SILVANI has left Argentina's River Plate for Universidad de Chile on a one-year loan for $200,000, with a $1.2m option to buy.

ERIC WEIL

Brazil

Tulio stops scoring

Botafogo's goal-getter loses his way in Rio

TALK ABOUT the kiss of death. The March issue of *WORLD SOCCER* carried a double-page spread describing Tulio as Brazil's top marksman. Almost inevitably, Tulio's goals promptly dried up.

He has hit the net just twice in real games since then (he scored a few in the Carioca Championship but we refuse to recognise this as a proper competition).

Rows with Botafogo team-mates, media reports of domestic problems and a missed training session have added up to a miserable start to the season both for Tulio and for his club, the reigning Brazilian champions.

In the Rio de Janeiro championship, Botafogo began with 2-2 draws against modest opponents, America and Bangu (they were 2-0 down both times). And in the Copa Brazil they have been humiliated by the amateurs of Corissiba, who come from deep in the Sertao, the dry, desolate and poverty-stricken scrubland that makes up most of north-east Brazil.

Corissiba won the first leg 1-0, and not even eventual victory in the second leg will wipe out the memory of that result.

Botafogo then set off on their Copa Libertadores campaign – a competition in which Tulio has vowed to finish as top scorer – with a 3-0 defeat away to Corinthians.

The root of Tulio's problems is that Botafogo have sold Donizete, who last year supplied a large percentage of his chances. In his place they have bought Bentinho from Portuguesa, but the new partnership has shown no signs of hitting it off.

Bentinho was substituted in four consecutive matches: his response was that he scores his goals in the second half and that he would be happy to go back to Portuguesa if Botafogo did not want him.

While other South American clubs tend to reinforce their teams, often with imported players, in the run-up to the Libertadores, Botafogo did exactly the opposite. The close-season departures of midfielder Sergio Manoel (to Japan), Iranildo (to Flamengo) and Leandro (back to Vasco da Gama after his loan ended), plus manager Paulo Autuori's decision to quit and go to Benfica, all contributed to the decline.

No adequate replacements have been signed, and while Marinho Perez, Autuori's replacement, has taken the flak for the bad results, it was in fact the board's decision to offload the players.

Off the field, Tulio did a passable imitation of Romario when he missed a training session the day before the Corinthians game. Two days later he was involved in a row with defender Wilson Gottardo (not the first time the two have fallen out).

Romario has been training with a new striking partner – Amoroso from Guarani, still only 21 and with the potential to rise to the same level as Romario and Tulio.

He was valued at £7.75million by Guarani after he finished as joint-top scorer in the 1994 Brazilian championship with 19 goals, and he can justifiably claim to help more with the approach work than his two more illustrious counterparts. Then a brutal kicking by Ferroviaria defenders in a Sao Paulo championship game last year left him needing a knee operation, and he took the rest of last year off to recover.

Amoroso scored one goal for Guarani in January following his comeback before Flamengo signed him, and we now wait to see whether he can fully recover.

He was given a stunningly low-key reception by Flamengo, who obviously remembered how Edmundo failed to deliver after being greeted with a mini-carnival.

Over in Sao Paulo, Palmeiras and Portuguesa look as if they will finish the first stage of the championship as the top two. This would guarantee them a place in the final play-offs along with the top pair in the second stage.

Firing blanks . . . Botafogo's Tulio

Palmeiras began the competition with 6-1 and 7-1 wins over Ferroviaria and Norovizontino respectively, then bettered both results with an 8-0 win away to the other Botafogo (the team from Riberao Preto, where both Socrates and brother Rai started out).

That gave them 10 wins and a draw from 11 games. Portuguesa were level on points, though having played a game more, thanks to successive wins over Corinthians and Sao Paulo.

Portuguesa are a club with a decent record, but always half a step behind the likes of Santos, Sao Paulo, Corinthians and Palmeiras. They usually put up respectable performances in competitions, but, like similar clubs such as Guarani (from Campinas) and Bangu (from Rio de Janeiro), they suffer from the Brazilian idea that teams who do not win trophies are not worth supporting, even if they play good football.

Only a few hundred Portuguesa fans saw the win over Sao Paulo, and manager Valdir Espinosa, in something approaching a televised address to the nation, said: "I want to know how many Portuguesa fans there are and I appeal to you to come to our next game, which is very important."

Sao Paulo's Muricy Ramalho joined Marinho Perez at the top of the beleaguered managers chart after his team lost 5-0 to Corinthians. Ramalho has been given the job on a full-time basis until doctors decide that Tele Santana, who suffered a minor heart attack in January, is fit to return. He is likely to be out for another six weeks.

Corinthians forward Edmundo was given a three-match ban for his sending-off in the 3-1 defeat by Palmeiras, when he was shown the red card only one minute after scoring the goal which kept Corinthians in the game after they had gone two down.

This was Edmundo's second dismissal in three weeks, the previous one having been against Santos. Both were for punching defenders.

The Santos incident cost Edmundo the minimum one-match suspension – a decision which revealed all the deficiencies of the Sao Paulo Federation's disciplinary system.

The club representative defending Edmundo took along what he thought was a video of the incident. But it turned out to be one of his kids' tapes showing an excerpt from *Scooby Doo*! The tribunal obviously enjoyed it; they let Edmundo off with the minimum penalty and thus freed him to play in the derby with Palmeiras, when his absence would have knocked a few thousand off the attendance.

Santos sacked manager Cabralzinho in January, which looked stupid then and even more stupid now that they have sacked Candinho as well, after a humiliating defeat against Guarani, whose manager is . . . Cabralzinho.

Last year he took Santos to the final of the Brazilian championship, but he was fired for getting upset at the fact that director Clodoaldo (the 1970 World Cup player) turned up seven hours late for a meeting to discuss a new contract.

BRIAN HOMEWOOD

Mexico

El Buitre makes a difference

Impressive . . . Emilio Butragueno

THERE are only four games left in the regular schedule of the Mexican League. Then the play-offs will begin.

As things stand, the two best teams are Necaxa (last year's champions) and Cruz Azul. But finishing in first place during the regular season usually means little. Since 1971, when the play-off system was adopted, there have been 24 titles decided by this unfair system: but only 10 of the teams finishing top at the end of the regular stage have become champions .

This year, when the number of teams in the Premier League went down to 18 from the 20 that have existed since 1974, it seems a joke that 10 will play the *liguilla* (meaning 'little league'), the appropriate name given to the play-offs.

The first two teams to qualify, as was expected with both playing in the weakest group, were America and newcomer Atletico Celaya, for whom Emilio Butragueno showed class and a fighting spirit not always apparent during his days at Real Madrid.

The impact of "El Buitre" was such that when he was out of the line-up due to an injury the team lost four matches in a row. The other three teams in the America-Celaya group are fighting to avoid relegation, so it was no surprise that the top two clinched *liguilla* berths so early, despite the fact that they have played so-so soccer.

Guadalajara, as I anticipated, have not been able to recover from the bad start with Ossie Ardiles, and Leo Beenhakker has failed to live up to expectations.

Much of the trouble arises from the fact that he has not fielded striker Daniel Guzman. The Dutchman is a strong disciplinarian, while Guzman is known for his practical jokes.

Pumas Unam, Veracruz, Cruz Azul and Necaxa seem sure bets, as well as Tigres Uanl, who could qualify for the play-offs and perhaps even reach the final. They are playing well – they recently won the Copa Mexico – but could also be eligible for relegation to the Second Division.

This could happen because some very creative mind three years ago decided that the team to go down would be the one with the worst average points record over the past three seasons.

However if Tigres win the title in the play-offs, they would not go down! Next year the system will revert to the bottom club being relegated.

The League will end by early May and will go down in history as one of the closest races ever as well as for the number of managers fired: 14 in total.

Only America (Bielsa), Atlas (Solari), Atletico Celaya (Alvarez), Monterrey (Salah), Necaxa (Lapuente), Pumas Unam (Ferreti) and Tigres Uanl (Vucetich) have the same manager as when the season began.

CARLOS RAMIREZ

Canada

Olympic dates lined up

CANADA will stage the final round of Olympic qualifying in the CONCACAF region during May, with all games scheduled for Edmonton, Alberta.

The tournament opens on Friday May 10, with Canada playing Jamaica, and ends on May 19 with three games. The top team will advance to Atlanta 96, while the second will play the winner of the Oceania group home and away on May 26 and June 2.

Most of the games in Edmonton will be played in Commonwealth Stadium, but nearby Clarke Stadium and Jasper Bowl also will be used.

In addition to Canada and Jamaica, the other CONCACAF nations competing are Mexico, El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Trinidad & Tobago.

Canadian head coach Bob Lenarduzzi is preparing his squad for the competition by taking them to play in a three-team tournament in Palermo, against two Italian Under-21 squads.

The Canadians then go to Southern California for one or two games against Mexico's Under-23 team, followed by two games against the United States Under-23s, in Coquitlam, British Columbia, and Mewata Stadium, Calgary.

A new interpretation of the FIFA regulations has led to the return of three former Olympic players to the team. Previously, players who had played in past qualifying competitions, regardless of age, would be ineligible to play in another. So Tom Kouzmanis, Scott Macey and Devor Cepo are now eligible again.

COLIN JOSE

CONCACAF Briefs

Olimpia cling to the lead

A TENSE battle for supremacy in Honduras persisted as table-topping Olimpia and second-placed Motagua registered crucial victories on the same day.

Christian Santamaria struck in the 45th and 53rd minutes against Independiente to give Olimpia a 2-1 win, but relentless Motagua easily defeated Broncos 4-0, thanks to goals by Geovanny Castro, Fabricio Perez, Denilson Costa and Brazilian newcomer Sergio Pereira.

After a disappointing showing at the CONCACAF Gold Cup, the national squad exhibited signs of improvement during a 2-1 defeat by Colombia before 15,231 fans at the Orange Bowl in Miami.

The Hondurans took an early lead through Milton Nunez, but Ivan Valenciano connected with two free-kicks to seal the victory.

Costa Rica

ALAJUELA's grip on the top spot persists, but Herediano are mounting a steady challenge. If they had beaten visiting strugglers Perez Zeledon, instead of drawing 2-2, they would have taken the lead.

Saprissa have stayed in the race, one point behind Herediano. A narrow 2-1 win over bottom-of-the-table Guanacaste was uninspired, though sufficient.

Guatemala

MUNICIPAL have taken over first place in the Octagonal Group on goal difference, but surprising Sacachispas are keeping pace with the front-runners.

In the CONCACAF Champions Cup, Comunicaciones became the first club to advance to the second round, getting past Cosmos FC of Panama 6-0 on aggregate.

El Salvador

FAS's form has been indifferent of late, but they still top the table. Luis Angel Firpo and Aguila, though, are hot on the trail, two points behind.

Firpo, playing without star forward Raul Diaz Arce (transferred to Los Angeles Galaxy), recovered some composure late on against El Roble in a 2-2 draw. William Renderos and Celio Rodriguez scored in the final seven minutes.

SCOTT GLEBA

United States

The profit motive strikes again

Paul Gardner reports on the cash-for-goals plan to spice up MLS

THE ACCEPTED wisdom is that Americans don't understand soccer. They have no grasp of its skill and its subtleties, no patience with its refusal to light up the scoreboard every few minutes.

All the Americans want, we hear, is a cheap thrill. Read: goals, and more goals. It was the Americans who wanted larger goals. Again, that's what we were told – even though the people at Major League Soccer insist that it was FIFA who applied the pressure.

The bigger-goal idea has been torpedoed by the International Board. MLS will use the regulation goals. And if the pre-season practice games are anything to go by, there will be no goal-fest. A total of 18 games featured 49 goals, for an average of 2.72 per game; World Cup 94 came in at 2.71. Only three times in those 18 games did a team manage to score more than twice.

The 10 MLS coaches had earlier expressed the unanimous opinion that they didn't need *any* rule changes to encourage scoring as they were all going to play adventurous attacking soccer anyway. They debated the idea of awarding points for goals scored. The old NASL used to do this: they awarded six points for a win, plus one point for each goal scored up to a total of three. Thus a team winning 6-3 got the maximum nine points – while the losing side got 3 points for its three goals.

It was a scheme that the NASL used for 18 years, and it worked pretty well. But the MLS coaches, who apparently border on perfection, turned that down, too.

And then they come in at 2.72 goals per game. Will that be enough to satisfy the baying hordes of fans who will probably wreck the stadiums if they have to sit through a 0-0 game?

Probably not, but the MLS has a cunning master plan to make sure the goals get scored, and a very American approach to goal scoring it is, too.

The MLS will buy its goals. The idea is that the League will pay each team $1,000 for a one-goal-margin win, $2,000 for a two-goal margin, and $3,000 for a three-goal margin. The money will go into a team pool and the players themselves can then decide at the end of the season how they want to divide it up.

There's more. A second way of priming the greed pump will be to 'incentivize' (the MLS word, not mine) the coaches by awarding cash prizes for the highest scoring team. Which makes it pretty clear why points-for-goals got thrown out of the window. What an old-fashioned idea.

How much slicker to hand out bucks instead.

Japan

Best yet by Kamo's crew

JAPAN's national team made a dramatic start to 1996 at the Carlsberg Cup in Hong Kong, swamping Poland 5-0 and falling only on penalties to Sweden in the final.

These were Japan's best performances yet, and manager Shu Kamo described the Poland game as "the sort of match that comes only once in several dozen outings."

Almost all the play took place in the Polish half as the Japanese, marshalled by defensive midfielder Motohiro Yamaguchi of Yokohama Flugels, applied intense zonal pressure for the full 90 minutes.

Japan's left wing, the territory of wing-back Naoki Soma of Kashima Antlers and attacking midfielder Hiroshi Nanami of Jubilo Iwata, was particularly deadly, but this was a victory for the whole team.

Sweden proved much tougher and took the lead early in the second half. Japan were level, though, when Norio Omura of Yokohama Marinos headed home a cross from Kazu Miura, and then held their own through extra time as well. Sweden won the penalty shoot-out 5-4 after Takagi shot Japan's third kick against the bar.

Japan's squad for the Asian Cup is not yet fixed. Some members of the Olympic squad are expected to join after Atlanta, notably Masakiyo Maezono of Yokohama Flugels. Ietsuji Hashiratani of Verdy Kawasaki, who missed this series with flu, surely will be recalled to defence.

Hiroaki Morishima of Cerezo Osaka had to sit out all but the final minutes of the Sweden game due to an ankle injury, and Urawa Reds striker Masahiro Fukuda, J.League top scorer last year, should soon be back.

GAMBA OSAKA began well on the J.League's opening day with a spectacular 2-1 away win over the champions, Yokohama Marinos.

The drama came not so much in the narrow result as in the content, with restructured Gamba attacking from start to finish with quick, first-time passing and fierce challenges.

Eventually Marinos lost their heads: Fumitake Miura, Alberto Acosta and Gustavo Zapata were booked, Noda was sent off.

Two other championship contenders, Nagoya Grampus Eight and Kashima Antlers, swept to 4-1 home wins over Bellmare Hiratsuka and Shimizu S-Pulse, respectively.

Those results marked disastrous starts for two new managers, Osvaldo Ardiles at Shimizu and Toninho Moura at Bellmare.

The other most-fancied team, Verdy Kawasaki, were lucky to overcome new boys Kyoto Purple Sanga 1-0 at home, with a goal by Kazu Miura. Verdy, with new signings, Donizete and Caio, looked far from their best.

Yokohama Flugels started well under their new manager Otacilio, with a 2-0 win at Cerezo Osaka.

NAGOYA GRAMPUS EIGHT began the new season where they left off with a comfortable Cup Final victory at Tokyo's National Stadium.

Grampus, the Emperor's Cup-winners, beat J.League champions Yokohama Marinos 2-0 in the Xerox Super Cup, the curtain-raiser to the season.

Grampus attacked from the start and took firm control with first-half goals from Tetsuya Okayama and new signing Kenji Fukuda, a youth international straight out of high school.

THE J.League's vision for future growth calls for continued expansion through 1998 and a Second Division to start from 1999.

Both the divisions will be professional, with 16 teams each. Second Division clubs must have a minimum stadium capacity of 10,000, youth team programmes and the other standard Japanese requirements.

Several candidates are jockeying for promotion. Vissel Kobe, Tosu Futures and Brummel Sendai have J.League affiliate status now and could be promoted next year. Oita Trinity, NEC Yamagata, Venteforet Kofu and others also are positioning for the race.

Nine regional amateur leagues will operate beneath the professional structure.

MIKE PLASTOW AND MICHI ISHIJIMA

MASAMI IHARI of Yokohama Marinos *(right)* **has been named as the Asian Footballer of the Year.**

The 28-year-old libero had a remarkable year, becoming the first Asian to score in an international at Wembley, in Japan's 2-1 defeat by England, and leading his club to a first J.League title. He is now Japan's most-capped player, with 79 'A' appearances.

The Oman Under-17 side was named Team of the Year, for reaching the semi-finals of the World Youth Cup, and Park Jung Hwan of Ilwha Chunma was chosen as Manager of the Year.

IN BRIEF

Asian Cup

SAUDI ARABIA became the first team to qualify for the 1996 Asian Cup finals, due to be held in the UAE, recording 12 maximum points out of four matches. Youssouf al-Thunayyan scored five of his side's 10 goals.

Al Ittihad top the Saudi table for the first time in six years, with Al Ahly two points behind.

Veteran international Majed Abdullah survived a car accident, in which one of his closest friends was killed, on the highway linking Riyadh to Boraydah.

Bahrain

UNBEATEN Al Wehda have a splendid chance of winning the Bahrain Mumtaz title for the first time in 20 years.

At the halfway stage, eight victories and three draws, with only two goals conceded, had put them four points ahead of Bahrein, five clear of Muharraq and six in front of Al Ahli

India

EAST BENGAL's victory in the IFA Shield Final was marred by disgraceful scenes, with two stoppages because of crowd invasions and fights between fans and police.

The match must have been one of the longest in history, overrunning by 41 minutes in addition to half an hour of extra time and a penalty shoot-out.

The first stoppage, lasting 26 minutes, followed referee Sagar Sen's dismissal of Bhutta (East Bengal) and Arman of Dhaka's Mohammedan Sporting, after an off-the-ball clash. The second came when the referee refused to award a penalty against East Bengal, despite what seemed an obvious foul.

Masud Rana gave Mohammedan the lead, but Ranjan Dey equalised. There were no more goals, and so the match went to penalties, with Manta Dora saving three and giving his club the shield for the 23rd time, in their 34th final.

The tournament was played in Calcutta, East Bengal's home city, with two groups of four clubs.

Mohammedan, from Bangladesh, topped one group by three points, with East Bengal second despite losing 4-0 to Tata Football Academy. The other section was desperately close, with goal difference deciding after all four teams had won one game, drawn one and lost one.

Jordan

AL WAHADAT retained the title, the fifth since promotion in 1976.

The club staged a stunning comeback in the second half of the race, recording nine wins and two draws, and finished with 48 points from 22 matches, five ahead of Al Ramtha.

Oman

THE media heavily criticised manger Jozef Venglos following their national team's humiliating 3-0 home defeat by Kuwait, the second in two weeks. Kuwait previously won 1-0 in Kuwait City.

Defending champions Sour stretched their lead to three points over Dhofar at the end of round 18, having 40 points with eight games rounds to go.

United Arab Emirates

THE national team will be touring Europe in May, with friendlies against Bulgaria, Belgium and Russia high on their agenda in the run-up to the 1996 Asian Cup finals.

Sharjah, coached by former Brazilian star Amarildo, won the League title for the fourth time, beating relegated Al Ahly of Dubai 4-1 in their final fixture. Al Wasl were four points behind. Kalba were promoted after only one season in Division Two.

Correspondents: *MOHAMED CHBARO, AIDAN PAYNE, GC DAS.*

Lebanon

Four out of four for Yorath

Welsh coach has made a big impact in the Middle East

WELSHMAN Terry Yorath's move to the Middle-East has been enough to persuade Lebanon that international football has a future in that country.

When the FA of Wales sacked Yorath, a new age for football dawned in Lebanon.

Yorath arrived in June 1995, with a lucrative tax-free one-year extendable contract close to the £200,000 mark, a coastal apartment and a luxury car, and he is finding his coaching venture on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean anything but deterring.

The local media and public often view the prospect of a new manager with a dread, because of the bitter experiences with previous foreign coaches.

But Yorath's commitment to the game, invaluable experience and creative ideas brought instant composure to the national team, discipline and positive results.

Four successive friendly international victories in Beirut have moved Lebanon an astonishing 40 places in the world rankings from 145 to 105, between December 95 and February 96.

It's not only the results that mean a lot to Yorath – it's the manner. His side came from behind to beat both Slovakia and Kazakhstan 2-1 before star striker Wartan Ghazarian snatched both goals in the remaining wins, 1-0 over Cyprus and Ecuador.

Yorath used a 5-3-2 playing system, with three central defenders and two attacking full-backs. He also produced a fine centre-forward, Wartan Ghazarian, nominated by the Asian Football Confederation as Asian Player of the Month for January.

Al Ansar landed their eighth successive league title with five matches to go. A convincing 2-0 victory over fourth-placed Homentmen shot them 16 points clear of Safa, 3-1 winners against third-placed Al Borj.

MOHAMED CHBARO

China

Su comes back at 62

LIAONING's attempt to return to the top of Chinese football is being led by a 62-year-old coach.

He is Su Yongshun, who became a national hero during the qualifying tournament for the 1982 World Cup, when he helped the national team to beat Saudi Arabia (twice) and Kuwait, and to draw with New Zealand, before their eventual elimination.

Su later emigrated to Canada, but returned to China and rejected several offers before joining Liaoning, the former giants relegated at the end of last season.

He replaces Li Yingfa, who won seven titles with the club but has now gone to another Second Division outfit, Shenyang.

Another coach on the move, Hu Zhigang, has left newly-promoted Shenzhen for Shanghai Yuyuan, a club run by a supermarket chain.

Army club August First do not have a ground of their own, but are free to choose any stadium in which to play home games. In the past two seasons they have been at Taiyuan City and then Xi'an City, but when the new season starts on April 14 they will be based in Kunming, where the Olympic team play.

ZHENG MING

Waitakere's rapid rise

Paul Moon on New Zealand's leading club side

VERY FEW clubs anywhere in the world can match the speed of Waitakere City's rise to ascendancy. They were founded in 1988, and took only seven years to become top dogs in New Zealand.

Waitakere were formed to provide the burgeoning western suburbs of Auckland with a flagship in the national league. Three clubs from the area – West Auckland, Te Atatu and Lynndale – struck a deal, each allowing the new composite outfit access to their best senior players while retaining independent entities and fielding separate teams in the local junior competitions and the Northern Regional League.

The name Waitakere (pronounced Why-Tak-A-Ray and meaning Deep Water in Maori) City had just been adopted by the district council which administers most of West Auckland, and was one the majority of their supporters could identify with.

None of the constituent clubs had made any great waves nationally, although West Auckland and Lynndale recorded victories in regional league subsidiary competitions. The former originally made the biggest contributions, providing the bulk of players, livewire chairman Rex Dawkins and coach Keith Pritchett.

Pritchett, a Scotsman, had just retired as a player, having spent two seasons in New Zealand after making 250 English League appearances (the majority of them during Watford's remarkable climb from Division Four to Division One), while Dawkins was a skilled entrepreneur with interests as diverse as video rental stores and personalised car number plates. They were the most influential figures in Waitakere's rapid advance.

Pritchett's tactical skills and motivating ability placed him several levels above most other New Zealand coaches, despite being an unrepentant advocate of the long ball, like Graham Taylor, his old boss at Watford, .

"Initially, our playing personnel was suited solely to the long ball," he said. "But we have subsequently refined our approach and play the ball to feet much more now.

"We like to get the ball behind defences and we are still fairly direct. A lot of rubbish is talked about the long ball. I was in South America (as assistant coach to the New Zealand national team) and we played Uruguay just before they won the Copa America. Nobody could be more direct than the Uruguayans when it suits them.

"If your opposition are vulnerable to a long through ball, you exploit it. If they are not vulnerable, then you use a more patient build-up. Soccer, after all, is a simple sport."

Dawkins has been just as important in Waitakere's early development. Not only did his business acumen place the club on a sound financial footing, but he also adopted a policy almost unique for a Kiwi soccer official and put players above administrators in importance.

Keith Pritchett during his playing days at Watford

Several of Auckland's better players responded by moving to City and have remained loyal to the club, despite the poor training and post-match facilities, which improved only through the amalgamation with the modest Massey club in 1991.

Massey had few good players, but could offer impressive club rooms, junior teams and several able office-bearers, as well as an excellent home ground (previously, a speedway stadium had been rented). All this helped City to considerably strengthen their infrastructure.

Waitakere's second national league campaign produced their first title. A further league triumph followed in 1992, the Chatham Cup was won in 1994 and the double of Chatham Cup and Superclub Championship (which replaced the league) was secured last year.

Dawkins left the club in 1993, to move into regional association administration, and Pritchett also is set to depart, having been appointed coach of the New Zealand national team *(see below right)*.

Peter Bult, who was drafted on to the committee from Massey five years ago, has replaced Dawkins and is confident Waitakere can maintain momentum. Recently, he announced that Pritchett's assistant, Steve Cain, would step into his boss's shoes for the 1996-97 season, and that the biggest sponsorship agreement in Waitakere's history, with Xerox, had been finalised. The deal, Bult said, "offers enormous potential".

His optimism is well founded. After a sluggish start, his team have jumped to the top of the reconstituted national league and look more than capable of staying there.

IN BRIEF

THE date for the second leg of the Oceania Confederation Cup semi-final between Tahiti and Solomon Islands in Papeete has yet to be set, even though the first match – won 1-0 by the Tahitians – was staged at Honiara last November.

Solomon Islands Football Federation officials cited problems with airline schedules as the reason for the delay, although the press claim the federation does not have sufficient funds to finance the trip and is reluctant to play a game it believes unwinnable.

There is little sign of enthusiasm for the Cup in Australia either, even though the Socceroos are through to the final. All facets of the Australian soccer media – from the highly respected *On The Ball* television programme to the downmarket comic *Studs Up* – have suggested they were given the false impression that the winners of the competition would qualify for the Intercontinental Cup, scheduled for next year. That, apparently, was also the belief of the Australian and New Zealand football associations.

Most fingers have pointed at Oceania Football Confederation president Charlie Dempsey, whose brainchild the Cup is. Dempsey, however, proclaims his innocence. "Nobody is assured of a place in the Intercontinental Cup," he said. "Not even the European champions have been invited yet, as the format has yet to be decided, and I should know – I sit on the Cup organising committee."

That may be correct, but if Dempsey didn't spread the notion, who else is authorative enough to have done so?

PAUL MOON

Australia All square with Japan

THE Australia-Japan series produced two very different results; the Asian Cup holders winning the opening encounter 4-1 but the hosts bouncing back with a 3-0 success four days later.

During the first match at Wollongong, the Japanese were much too slick for their opponents, but led only through a Motohiro Yamaguchi goal at half-time. Any hopes the Socceroos harboured of getting back into the game disappeared two minutes about the break when influential midfielder Milan Blagojevic was sent off.

Two Takuya Takagi goals put the result beyond doubt before Nigerian-born debutant Francis Awaritefe pulled one back for Australia. Japan, however, had the last word through Hajime Moriyasu's goal three minutes from the end.

Melbourne offered a total contrast. The determined Australians, with five changes to their starting line-up, took control from the moment Damian Mori put them ahead on the quarter hour mark. Joe Spiteri and Matt Bingley added goals in the second half.

PAUL MOON

Clark quits

FORMER Watford defender Keith Pritchett has succeeded his fellow Scot Bobby Clark as New Zealand national team coach.

Pritchett, who guided Waitakere City to a string of domestic honours, has lived in New Zealand for 10 years. His position is part-time. Joe McGrath, though, will be employed in a full-time capacity as New Zealand's director of coaching.

McGrath recently left a similar post with the Football Association of Ireland in Dublin.

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Africa

Changes in the dash for cash

SOUTH AFRICA will change the soccer calendar and opt for a new-style league as the potential for increased revenue comes in the wake of the country's triumph in the African Nations Cup finals.

A new Premier League is to be launched in July to run concurrently with existing European seasons.

To date, South Africa's 18-team First Division has been run from March to November, but dwindling crowds, growing apathy and poor standards have prompted officials to rethink the marketing of the sport.

They have moved quickly to capitalise on a resurgence of interest after the Nations Cup, which has perked up the price of television rights.

Cable channel M-Net are the prime movers behind the new league, but their profile has not been greeted with much enthusiasm. The fans are enraged by the idea of having to pay to watch soccer on TV when to date it has been shown free on the public service.

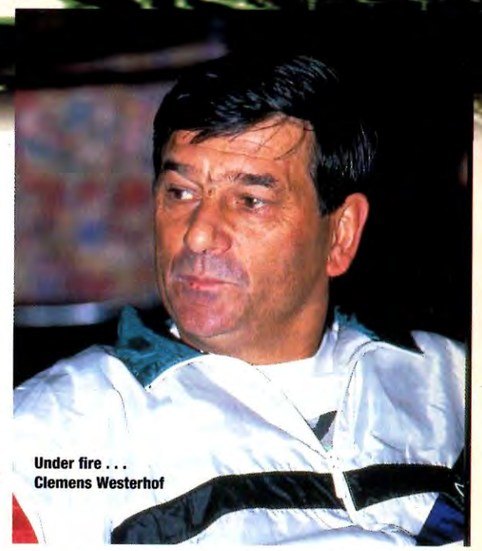
M-Net will now share coverage with the South African Broadcasting Corporation, but their input has meant a great financial windfall for the clubs.

In the meantime, the Coca-Cola Cup has been expanded to keep the teams busy with a mini-league and then knockout format. The winner of the competition, which ends in July, will represent South Africa in the 1997 African Champions Cup, and the runner-up in the CAF Cup.

Clubs are positioning themselves for the new league with a myriad of signings. Orlando Pirates have hired Ukrainian Viktor Bondarenko as coach and bought Gabonese international defender Guy-Roger Nzeng, while Cape Town Spurs have been sold and have a nearly new team under Sergio dos Santos.

The double champions were forced to pull out of the African Champions Cup because the old management had sold most of their players and left fewer than 11 registered for the competition. As a result Desportivo Maputo of Mozambique had a walkover in the first round.

In the pre-season Top Eight Cup, Mamelodi Sundowns were humbled at home by QwaQwa Stars 4-0 - a result which led the club to suspend Clemens Westerhof.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MARK GLEESON

Kids aim to save Nigeria's face

AFRICA will have a strong presence at the Olympic Games in Atlanta after the qualification of Nigeria, Tunisia and Ghana, who were bronze medallists last time out.

Nigeria in particular will be key contenders for the gold medal that has so far eluded teams from the African continent. This could be the last opportunity Nigeria will have to make an impression on the world's footballing stage for a while, because their seniors face an imminent ban from the World Cup.

Nigeria's military regime, seeking to score diplomatic points against Nelson Mandela, refused to allow their national side to defend the African Nations Cup in South Africa in January. As a result, the Confederation of African Football has banned the Super Eagles from the next two Nations Cup competitions, effectively exiling them from African soccer until the turn of the century.

FIFA is likely to extend that ban to the upcoming World Cup qualifiers.

The ban, however, will not apply to the under-age teams such as the Olympic side, who beat Zimbabwe 2-0 on aggregate in their final qualifying tie.

A late goal from Hungarian-based Teslim Fatusi in the first leg in Harare virtually clinched it for the Nigerians, who added a second in the return leg in Lagos, through Babangida.

Goals were plentiful in the tie between Tunisia and Guinea, with the former going through 5-4 on aggregate.

Tunisia had surprisingly lost to Togo in the previous round last November but were restored to the competition because the Togolese had used an over-age player.

Four of the five goals in the home leg were scored by players who had competed for the senior team in the Nations Cup final, under the astute tutelage of former Polish World Cup star Henry Kasperczak.

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Brazilian-born Ismail Kurtz has been fired as **GHANA**'s coach after the fourth-place finish at the African Nations Cup.

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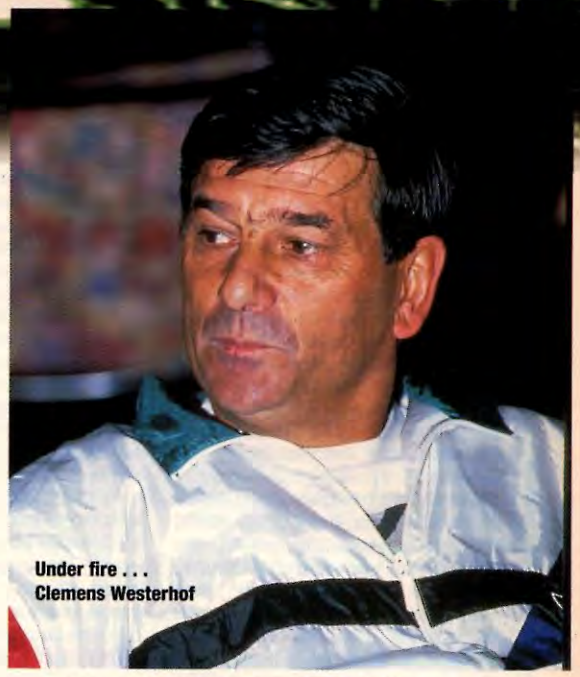

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Diary FEB/MARCH 1996

FEBRUARY							
Week	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
5				1	2	3	4
6	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
7	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
8	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
9	26	27	28	29			

MARCH							
Week	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
9					1	2	3
10	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
12	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
13	25	26	27	28	29	30	31

APRIL							
Week	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
3	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
4	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
5	29	30					

MONDAY, FEB 26

BRAZIL: Kaiserslautern midfielder Arilson arrives back from Argentina after walking out on Brazil's Olympic squad in protest at being omitted from the team. Coach Mario Zagalo accuses him of betraying his team-mates and fans, and says he will never be picked for Brazil again.

FRANCE: Milan players George Weah and Patrick Vieira escape with just minor scratches after their car skids off the road at Imperia on their way to France. They complete their journey by taxi.

ENGLAND: Tottenham forward Darren Anderton is ruled out of Euro 96 because his recovery from a groin operation is taking much longer than expected . . . Newcastle's Faustino Asprilla and Manchester City's Keith Curle are charged with misconduct by the FA after their skirmishes in Saturday's 3-3 draw at Maine Road

FRANCE: Struggling Saint-Etienne dismiss coach Elie Baup. Technical director Max Bossis takes temporary charge of coaching duties . . . Paris Saint-Germain appoint a 'crisis committee' to help coach Luis Fernandez as speculation intensifies about his replacement by assistant Joel Bats.

HOLLAND: Ajax are contracted by Nottingham Forest to join them, Manchester United and Chelsea for a pre-season tournament on August 3 and 4 at the City Ground.

SCOTLAND: Manager Craig Brown names a 32-strong squad for an international get-together to prepare for Euro 96. Squad: Booth, Boyd, Burley, Calderwood, Collins, Durie , Ferguson, Gallacher, Gemmill, Goram, Gunn, Hendry, Jackson, Jess, Leighton, McAllister, McCall, McCoist, McGinlay, McKimmie, B McKinlay, T McKinlay, McLaren, McStay, Martin, Nevin, O'Donnell, O'Neil, Robertson, Shearer, Spencer, Walker.

TUESDAY 27

ARGENTINA: The Supreme Court rejects a request from Diego Maradona that he should be permitted to undertake community service if found guilty of shooting at reporters with an air rifle in 1994. The rejection means Maradona could incur a jail sentence.

CAMEROON: The federation (FECAFOOT) postpones a special congress demanded by FIFA in an ongoing administrative dispute which threatens Cameroon's participation in the 1998 World Cup qualifying competition.

ENGLAND: The Department of Employment, while continuing to hold up work permit applications from Marc Hottiger and Ilie Dumitrescu, grants a permit to Middlesbrough's new Brazilian left-back Branco, even though he has barely figured in Brazil's national team over the past two years.

NIGER: FIFA lift a ban imposed on Niger in the wake of elections for a new federation. A military coup in January had toppled the previous civilian government and – by extension – its sporting authorities.

SPAIN: Brazil international Mauro Silva extends his contract with Deportivo Coruna until 2000 – even though he could earn twice as much, around £5.5million, by accepting a rival offer from a Japanese club.

WEDNESDAY 28

ACTION: Australia and Sweden draw 0-0 in Sydney . . . Croatia hit back from 1-0 down to beat Poland 2-1 in Rijeka . . . Ajax complete their clean sweep of trophies by beating Zaragoza 4-0 in the second leg of the European Supercup, thus winning 5-1 on aggregate.

BRAZIL: Pele scores two goals for Santos in a friendly match against the youth team which marks the opening of a new training centre for young athletes in the city.

ENGLAND: Brazilian World Cup-winning full-back Branco arrives to join Middlesbrough but warns fans "not to expect too much too soon".

FRANCE: Bordeaux officials say they have had talks with Milan about new star Zinedine Zidane.

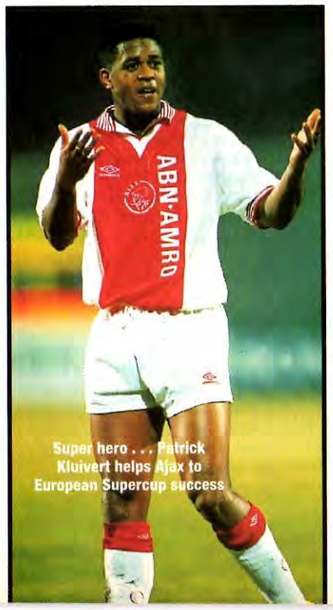
GERMANY: Karlsruhe beat Fortuna Dusseldorf 2-0 and qualify to face Kaiserslautern in the Cup Final in Berlin on May 25.

ITALY: Inter lose 1-0 at home – 4-1 on aggregate – to Fiorentina in their cup semi-final second leg.

PORTUGAL: Jorge Cadete's proposed transfer from Sporting to Celtic is frozen when the Portuguese federation says he is still under contract and could not, as Celtic expect, be released on a free transfer.

SPAIN: Barcelona beat neighbours Espanyol 4-2 on aggregate in their cup semi-final.

THURSDAY 29



Super hero . . . Patrick Kluivert helps Ajax to European Supercup success

BRAZIL: Altair Ramos, a trainer with Sao Paulo, recovers in intensive care after being struck by lightning during a training session. Ramos, 38, is given the kiss of life by a television reporter . . . debt-ridden Londrina are rewarding their players for good performances by giving them cattle instead of cash bonuses, says club president Marcelo Caldarelli, a wealthy cattle rancher.

BULGARIA: National coach Dimitar Penev says he regards the friendly against England at Wembley in March as his team's main warm-up for the European Championship finals.

ENGLAND: Branco says that the chance to play alongside Bryan Robson was one of the main reasons he signed for Middlesbrough.

ITALY: Lazio say that South African defender Mark Fish will join them next season if teams are allowed to field more than two foreigners from outside the European Union . . . a TV revolution hits Italian football as film maker Vittorio Cecchi Gori outbids state broadcaster RAI for the three-year contract to screen Serie A matches and provide live radio coverage. Cecchi Gori Communication, which owns television channel Telemontecarlo, wins by offering £90million per season for the television rights against RAI's £85million. The group also obtains radio rights with a bid of £6.4million for all three seasons against RAI's £6.2million.

SCOTLAND: Rangers complete the signing of Danish striker Erik Bo Andersen for £1.5million from Aalborg.

SPAIN: Atletico Madrid qualify for a Cup Final showdown against Barcelona, defeating Valencia 6-5 on aggregate despite losing the second leg of their semi-final 2-1 at home.

FRIDAY, MARCH 1

BELGIUM: UEFA has until Tuesday to tell the European Commission it has changed the transfer-fee system and nationality restrictions, says a Commission spokesman.

ENGLAND: Newcastle manager Kevin Keegan criticises the "trial by television" to which he feels record signing Faustino Asprilla has been subjected over his clashes with Manchester City skipper Keith Curle.

FRANCE: Cannes president Francis Borelli, who helped the club regain a place in the French top division three years ago, resigns.

HOLLAND: PSV ask FIFA to suspend Brazilian midfielder Vampeta if he does not return from South America. He has been on loan with Fluminense . . . Feyenoord sell winger Regi Blinker to Sheffield Wednesday.

SWITZERLAND: FIFA says the International Board will soon consider the proposal from England that referees who play the advantage rule should be able to change their mind if the advantage does not materialise.

SATURDAY 2

ACTION: Paris Saint-Germain thank Rai for the goal which provides the French League leaders with a 1-0 win away at Rennes . . . Bayern Munich regain the leadership in Germany, beating TSV 1860 4-2, while Dortmund are held 2-2 by Monchengladbach . . . Juventus tune up impressively for their Champions League clash with Real Madrid by winning 5-0 away against Padova in Italy. Alex Del Piero scores twice . . . Real Madrid also score five – at home to relegation-threatened Salamanca.

SUNDAY 3

ACTION: Nigeria beat Zimbabwe 1-0 in an African Olympic qualifier . . . Edmundo is sent off for the second time in three weeks as Corinthians lose 3-1 to Palmeiras in the Sao Paulo championship . . . Panathinaikos beat Aris 3-1 in Greece to edge one point ahead of AEK at the top . . . in Holland, Vitesse Arnhem condemn champions Ajax to only their second League defeat of the season . . . a hat-trick by Brazilian winger Edmilson Pimenta lifts Portuguese champions Porto to a 6-3 home victory over Braga . . . Scottish champions Rangers win 2-0 away to Hibernian in a controversial match in which Rangers' goalkeeper Andy Goram is attacked on the pitch by a hooligan.

ENGLAND: Newcastle United's Faustino Asprilla says he will not make any public comment about anything until after the FA commission on his disrepute charge.

MONDAY 4

ACTION: Indonesia recover from a goal down to thrash India 7-1 in an Asian Cup qualifier.

BELGIUM: The EC says it has received written confirmation that UEFA is scrapping the transfer system (as it affects EU nationals moving from one country to another) and restrictions on EU players in teams in its competitions.

ENGLAND: Manchester United pull to within one point of Newcastle after beating the leaders 1-0 at St James' Park with a second-half goal from Eric Cantona.

ITALY: The all-powerful Italian Olympic Committee confirms reports that a punter lost the prospect of a record £5million jackpot because a referee abandoned the second division match between Salernitana and Foggia one minute from time after a pitch invasion.

REP IRELAND: Four of the Republic's five top football officials resign in the continuing controversy over the 1994 World Cup ticket sales. FAI president Louis Kilcoyne is the only top official left in office when senior vice-president Pat Quigley, vice-presidents Des Casey and Michael Hyland, and honorary treasurer Joe Delaney quit after a three-hour meeting with representatives of the 22 Irish national league clubs.

SCOTLAND: Hibernian chairman Douglas Cromb launches an internal inquiry into how a hooligan was able to attack Rangers goalkeeper Andy Goram on the pitch on Sunday. A man appears in court in Edinburgh charged with assault and breach of the peace over the incident . . . Nottingham Forest goalkeeper Mark Crossley is in line for a Euro 96 call-up after confirmation that he has a Scottish grandparent.

TUESDAY 5

ACTION: In the UEFA Cup quarter-final first legs, Barcelona struggle to hold PSV Eindhoven to a 2-2 draw in Nou Camp.

AUSTRIA: Ex-international Heribert Weber replaces Hermann Stessel as coach of Casino Salzburg. Weber was captain of the Salzburg side who reached the 1994 UEFA Cup Final.

ENGLAND: Investigators from the European Commission and Office of Fair Trading turn up without warning at Lancaster Gate to execute a search warrant within the FA offices as part of a co-ordinated inquiry into FIFA's controversial licensing system for official footballs (raids are undertaken simultaneously at the French and Danish federation offices in Paris and Copenhagen) . . . Home Office Minister of State David Maclean, in a Commons written reply, tells Labour sports spokesman Tom Pendry that more than 6,000 suspected or known football hooligans are listed in the computer of the National Criminal Intelligence Service Football Unit – but none of them is a foreign national.

SCOTLAND: Hearts invite Eric Cantona to play in a testimonial for long-serving defender Neil Berry against French side Lyon. Cantona is godfather to the son of Hearts' French keeper Gilles Rousset, who helped set up the game . . . police tighten security at Rangers games after hearing of an alleged offer to a group of English hooligans to attack Paul Gascoigne . . . Scotland's Euro 96 squad secure a £250,000 sponsorship with Barr Soft Drinks.

WEDNESDAY 6

ACTION: European champions Ajax extend their unbeaten run in the Champions League by winning 2-0 away at Borussia Dortmund. In the other quarter-final, first legs, Nantes beat Moscow Spartak 2-0, Legia Warsaw are held 0-0 at home by Panathinaikos and Real Madrid take a 1-0 advantage over Juventus . . . Malaysia beat India 5-2 in an Asian Cup qualifier but are pipped to a place in the finals on goal difference by Indonesia . . . Ecuador win 1-0 away to Japan's Olympic team.

DENMARK: Federation officials criticise European Commission inspectors for their heavy-handed raids in search of paperwork concerning the FIFA levy on footballs.

ENGLAND: The High Court in London dismisses a renewed bid by UEFA to prevent the Royal Mint producing the new £2 coin – because it has a soccer motif. UEFA's claim that the coin infringed its licensing rights was refuted by the Royal Mint and had been thrown out earlier by a judge in chambers . . . Manchester United say they expect to open the second tier of their new grandstand on Monday for the FA Cup quarter-final against Southampton, taking capacity close to 50,000 . . . Branco's appearance for Middlesbrough's reserves attracts a 15,000 crowd.

GERMANY: BSkyB buys 25 per cent of the German pay-TV channel, Premiere, which shows live Bundesliga football.

SWITZERLAND: In a statement which may cause concern in world football, the International Olympic Committee medical chief, Prince Alexandre de Merode, says fixed bans of two or four years for positive drug tests are no longer be enforceable because they could be held to infringe an athlete's right to work.

THURSDAY 7

ACTION: In the quarter-final openers of the Cup-winners Cup, Borussia Monchengladbach are held 2-2 in Dusseldorf by Feyenoord, Parma and La Coruna beat Paris Saint Germain and Zaragoza 1-0 respectively, and Rapid Vienna win 1-0 away at Moscow Dynamo.

CAMEROON: Four days after crashing 3-0 in Ghana in the African Olympic qualifying tournament, the Cameroon squad are reported stranded in Accra having run out of money.

ENGLAND: A change in the rules concerning work permits clears the transfers of Romanian Ilie Dumitrescu from Tottenham to West Ham and of Switzerland's Marc Hottiger from Newcastle to Everton . . . Sheffield United give a trial to Greek striker Zissis Vrizas from manager Howard Kendall's former club, Xanthi . . . Euro 96 director Glen Kirton reports the sale of the one millionth ticket for the finals.

FRANCE: Saint-Etienne's stadium is shut for one match by the disciplinary committee of the French League after home fans threw missiles at Lyon's goalkeeper Pascal Olmeta, twice halting last month's match.

ITALY: Inter coach Roy Hodgson is banned from the touchline for Sunday's derby with League leaders Milan after insulting the referee in the game against Lazio in Rome.

SPAIN: President Lorenzo Sanz discounts Milan's Fabio Capello as next coach of Real Madrid by saying "he has already agreed to go to Parma".

SWITZERLAND: The International Olympic Committee says it will support UEFA and other European sporting bodies in fighting problems arising from the Bosman case.

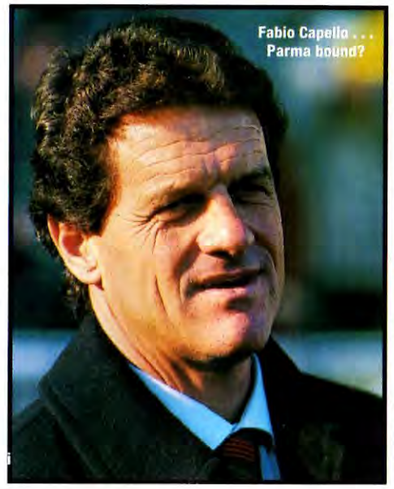
FRIDAY 8

ARGENTINA: Carlos Bilardo warns Boca Juniors fans not to expect instant miracles in the forthcoming championship.

BELGIUM: Clubs decide to scrap both the domestic transfer system and limits on the number of all foreign players – not merely European Union citizens.

BRAZIL: Romario promises to regain his World Cup-winning form as he prepares to renew his rivalry with Botafogo's Tulio in the new Carioca championship.

ENGLAND: Manchester City sign Giuseppe Mazzarelli, a former Swiss Under-21 midfielder from FC Zurich . . . Ruud Gullit says he will happily stay a further season with Chelsea.


Fabio Capello . . . Parma bound?

ITALY: Milan reluctantly release young midfielder Patrick Vieira for the French Under-21 squad two days before the crucial derby game against Inter.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND: Joe Delaney, former honorary treasurer of the FAI, apologises for misleading colleagues over a shortfall of £110,000 in World Cup ticket receipts.

SCOTLAND: Celtic set a 72-hour deadline on their attempt to sign Portugal forward Jorge Cadete from Sporting Lisbon.

SPAIN: Barcelona and Valencia open negotiations with La Coruna's Brazilian World Cup striker Bebeto . . . Atletico Madrid president Jesus Gil is in more trouble after scuffling with the general manager of Compostela, Jose Gonzalez Fidalgo, before a football league meeting in Madrid. The meeting later votes to accept the Bosman case and assimilate EU players, and reintroduce the League Cup.

SATURDAY 9

ACTION: In the African Champions Cup first round, Kalu Umar scores a hat-trick as Shooting Stars of Nigeria beat Manga Sport of Gabon 4-0 . . . Nottingham Forest beat Tottenham 3-1 in a penalty shoot-out after extra-time at White Hart Lane to reach the FA Cup quarter-finals . . . Bayern Munich fail to break their Freiburg jinx and lose 3-1 to allow Borussia Dortmund (1-0 winners over St Pauli) back into the Bundesliga lead . . . in Spain, Guillermo Amor scores the 4,000th League goal in Barcelona's history in their 4-1 defeat by Valencia.

BRAZIL: The International Board, meeting in Rio de Janeiro, dismisses any suggestion of allowing larger goals, even refusing the American MLS the opportunity to experiment. The board also rules that, from July 1, the maximum number of substitutes available to any team shall be seven (a maximum of three to be used) and that referees may award a free-kick if allowing the advantage does not work out. Permission is given for the kick-ins experiment in the Belgian Second Division to be continued for another season. But it is decided that world youth events should not be used for experimentation with the laws.

ITALY: Juventus striker Fabrizio Ravanelli injures his right hand when two men attack him at a petrol filling station . . . Milan coach Fabio Capello is reported to have agreed a three-year contract with Parma worth £3.2million.

PORTUGAL: Portugal goalkeeper Vitor Baia is under threat of a four-year ban after being involved in a scuffle with Campomaiorense vice-president Pedro Morcela following Porto's controversial 1-0 win.

SUNDAY .. 10

ACTION: Dominica and Antigua draw 3-3 in the opening qualifying match of the 1998 World Cup in Roseau . . . Stefan Effenberg scores one goal and makes another as Borussia Monchengladbach beat Hansa Rostock 3-2 to move into third place in Germany . . . Ajax maintain their revival with a 6-1 thrashing of Twente Enschede . . . Milan lose their second game of the season in Italy – by 1-0 to neighbours Internazionale . . . League leaders Atletico Madrid lose 2-0 at home to Valladolid while Real go down 3-0 away at bogey team Tenerife.

ENGLAND: Manchester rivals Lee Sharpe and Nicky Summerbee are at the centre of a Football Association probe into drugs and sex allegations published in a Sunday newspaper.

MONDAY 11

ITALY: The players' union calls a strike for Sunday following the breakdown of talks with the league and federation over the issues of retirement funds, foreign player limits and a greater say in how the game is administered.

ENGLAND: Swedish striker Niklas Gudmundsson, valued at £1million, joins Blackburn on a permanent basis after a three-month loan from Halmstad.

MALAYSIA: A year after more than 100 players and coaches were banned in a bribery scandal, Peter Vellapan, secretary of the Asian confederation, warns that a new gambling syndicate is expected to try to fix more matches this season.

SPAIN: Valencia are reported to have obtained first refusal if Bebeto is to leave La Coruna at the season's end.

SWITZERLAND: FIFA general secretary Sepp Blatter says that England still leads the world in one aspect of soccer – enjoying the game.

TURKEY: Brazil's World Cup-winning coach, Carlos Alberto Parreira, now in charge of Fenerbahce, says successor Mario Zagalo has got everything right in rebuilding the national team – and that he should use Dunga, Bebeto and Aldair as over-age players at the Olympic Games finals in Atlanta.

TUESDAY 12

ACTION: Hungary beat Scotland 2-1 in a European Under-21 quarter-final first leg.

BRAZIL: Corinthians striker Edmundo is banned for three matches after being sent off against Palmeiras . . . national champions Botafogo prepare, after 36 years, to make their debut in the South American Libertadores Cup.

DENMARK: Arsenal midfielder John Jensen rejoins Brondby on loan for the rest of the season.

ENGLAND: Millwall's Russian striker, Sergei Yuran, is suspended for three games having been sent off against Wolves for dissent.

HOLLAND: National coach Guus Hiddink confirms he will be watching Celtic striker Pierre Van Hooijdonk on Sunday in the Old Firm derby against Rangers.

ITALY: Gianluca Vialli, Juventus skipper and players' union officer, says it is too late to negotiate a halt to the impending players' strike.

KENYA: Vojo Gardesevic, former Iraqi head coach, is appointed boss of Kenya's national team, the Harambee Stars. His first challenge is guiding Kenya past Algeria in the first round of the World Cup qualifiers.

SPAIN: Ex-Real Madrid coach Benito Floro is fired by Albacete . . . Madrid president Lorenzo Sanz says Valencia forward Pedja Mijatovic wants to join Real.

WEDNESDAY 13

ACTION: Croatia beat South Korea 3-0, while Switzerland only scramble a 1-1 draw away to Luxembourg . . . in the European Under-21 quarter-final first legs, Germany and France draw 0-0, Olympic champions Spain win only 2-1 at home against the Czech Republic and Portugal beat Italy 1-0.

CZECH REPUBLIC: West Ham goalkeeper Ludo Miklosko tells the federation he is not interested in being selected for the national squad for Euro 96 because he wants to concentrate on his club football.

GREECE: AEK and Apollon qualify to meet in the cup final.

HOLLAND: Ajax go back on top after struggling to win 2-1 away at Fortuna Sittard.

ITALY: The government urges Italian players to call off their threatened strike and says it is willing to mediate in the dispute . . . an amateur player, Alessandro Pagan, 27, of Scorze-Peseggia near Venice, receives a 10-month and 20-day suspended prison sentence for elbowing an opponent in the face, breaking an eye socket and cheek bone.

SPAIN: Jordi Cruyff, son of Barcelona coach Johan, makes his comeback as a substitute after six months out with knee trouble, in a 5-1 defeat by neighbours Espanyol in the Catalunya Cup Final.

UNITED STATES: Major League Soccer and the A-League agree on arrangements for player transfers between the two leagues.

Back in action . . . Barcelona's Jordi Cruyff

Diary MARCH 1996

THURSDAY 14 MARCH

ARGENTINA: Alberto Tarantini, Argentina's 1978 World Cup-winning left-back, is charged with possession of drugs after being arrested on a warrant on leaving a nightclub in the exclusive Recoleta district. Police search his home and find ecstasy tablets and cocaine.
SPAIN: The federation opens disciplinary proceedings against Jesus Gil over the Atletico Madrid president's involvement in a scuffle with Compostela director Jose Fidalgo. Also charged by the federation are Fidalgo and the Compostela president, Jose Caneda.

FRIDAY 15 MARCH

GERMANY: Bernd Schuster is awarded £1.3million compensation after winning a four-month legal fight against his sacking by Bayer Leverkusen. He says he is considering offers to extend his playing career in the United States . . . Lothar Matthaus challenges Bayern team-mate Jurgen Klinsmann to a television debate over speculation about whether Klinsmann wants Matthaus back in the national team.
ITALY: FIGC president Antonio Matarrese says: "This time football players have gone over the top," following confirmation of their strike.
JAPAN: Italian striker Daniele Massaro may leave Shimizu S-Pulse after being dropped by new coach Ossie Ardiles for the season's opening match against Kashima Antlers.
PORTUGAL: Vitor Baia, the FC Porto goalkeeper and Portugal captain, is suspended for two months for retaliating against Campomaiorense director Pedro Morcela in a scuffle after last Friday's league match . . . Boavista's Bolivian midfielder, Erwin Sanchez, is suspended temporarily pending a full investigation into why he failed a dope test for excessive caffeine after a League game on January 13. Sanchez says he drank three cups of coffee during the day and took three pills containing caffeine for a headache.

SATURDAY 16 MARCH

ACTION: Marseille beat Lille 1-0 to reach the French Cup semi-finals . . . Bayern Munich regain a little confidence and morale by defeating Kaiserslautern 2-0, while Dortmund win 5-0 away at Stuttgart with Stephane Chapuisat scoring twice . . . Real Madrid pay a heavy price for their 2-0 win over Albacete as Paco Buyo and Fernando Redondo suffer injuries which will keep them out of the Champions League quarter-final return against Juventus.
ITALY: Juventus captain Gianluca Vialli, spokesman of the players' union, hits back at federation president Antonio Matarrese for comparing him with English outlaw Robin Hood.
AUSTRALIA: National coach Eddie Thomson says his team for the friendly against Scotland will be all European-based, except Sydney United central defender Tony Popovic.

SUNDAY 17 MARCH

ACTION: Nigeria, defeating Zimbabwe 1-0 (2-0 on aggregate), and Tunisia, 2-0 losers to Guinea (but 5-4 winners on aggregate), qualify for the Olympic Games finals.
ITALY: No football – as the unprecedented strike bites. Federation officials suggest the lost matchday will be rearranged for a Wednesday night.
SPAIN: Athletic Bilbao sack coach Dragoslav Stepanovic after losing 1-0 at home to Valencia. Technical director Jose Maria Amorrortu takes over.

Putting out Parma. . . Rai scores for PSG against Parma

MONDAY 18 MARCH

ACTION: Iraq beat the UAE 3-1 and Japan defeat Oman 4-1 in the Asian Olympic qualifying tournament.
FRANCE: Aime Jacquet recalls Paris Saint Germain defender Alain Roche to his squad of 16 to play Belgium. Youri Djorkaeff and Vincent Guerin are absent, injured. Squad: Lama, Martini, Angloma, Leboeuf, Roche, Thuram, Desailly, Di Meco, Karembeu, Laigle, Lamouchi, Deschamps, Zidane; Pedros, Loko, Dugarry.
GERMANY: Bulgarian Yordan Lechkov, who wants to quit Hamburg, will be disciplined, say club officials, for missing training twice . . . Lothar Matthaus is again absent as Berti Vogts announces his squad for the March 27 game against Denmark. Squad: Heinen, Kahn, Kopke, Meier; Babbel, Helmer, Kohler, Reuter, Sammer, Spanring, Worns; Albertz, Basler, Beinlich, Bode, Eilts, Freund, Hassler, Moller, Scholl, Strunz, Todt, Ziege; Bierhoff, Kirsten, Klinsmann, Kuntz.
ITALY: Players' union president Sergio Campana says that Sunday's strike was a complete success and that he was ready to resume negotiations with the federation.
ROMANIA: Shock and confusion as national coach Anghel Iordanescu appears to quit in a row over the federation's decision to delay implementation of a smaller, 16-team league.
SPAIN: Johan Cruyff, in Holland for Barcelona's UEFA Cup tie against PSV, laughs off claims that he is about to quit as coach as "a bad translation" of remarks in a radio interview.

TUESDAY 19 MARCH

ACTION: Bordeaux spring one of the shocks of the season, beating Milan 3-0 (and 3-2 on aggregate) to qualify alongside Barcelona, Bayern Munich and Slavia Prague for the semi-finals of the UEFA Cup . . . South Korea defeat Kazakhstan 2-1 in the Asian Olympic qualifiers.
DENMARK: A sportswear commercial, featuring Eric Cantona, Ian Wright, Ronaldo, Rui Costa, Paolo Maldini, Patrick Kluivert playing a game between a good and an evil side, is banned in cinemas for being too violent . . . Michael and Brian Laudrup are named in Denmark's squad to face Germany, despite speculation that a sponsorship row is about to explode again. Squad: Schmeichel, L Hogh, Rieper, J Hogh, Risager, Helveg, Vilfort, Schjoenberg, Steen Nielsen, Piechnik, M Laudrup, Thomsen, Beck, B Laudrup, Bo Andersen, P Rasmussen.

Speaking out . . . Italian players' union spokesman Gianluca Vialli

OBITUARIES

NIKOLAI STAROSTIN . . . one of the great names in Russian soccer, has died shortly before his 94th birthday – 60 years after being sent to a Siberian labour camp.

Starostin was one of the founders of Moscow Spartak and spent all his playing career with the club, often appearing alongside his three brothers. He also captained the Russian team, but was one of five leading figures arrested on Stalin's orders during a purge of alleged "bourgeois terrorists".

The club chairman was executed and Starostin and the other three were sent to Siberia for ten years. Fortunately, the camp commandant was a football fan, and Starostin was able to organise matches between the prisoners and against other camps.

He was freed in 1947, was again given the Order of Lenin that had been taken from him, and went on to coach Spartak and then to serve the club in various other capacities until shortly before his death.

ALAN BROWN . . . one of the most respected of English post-war coaches, dies aged 81. Brown managed Burnley, Sunderland and Sheffield Wednesday, and was a major influence on proteges such as Brian Clough, Howard Wilkinson and Lawrie McMenemy.

MARCH							
Week	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
9					1	2	3
10	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
12	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
13	25	26	27	28	29	30	31

GERMANY: Defender Stefan Reuter signs a new four-year contract with Borussia Dortmund . . . Bayern Munich president Franz Beckenbauer warns his players that they will be punished with fines or even dismissal for bringing the club into disrepute. Beckenbauer adds: "The players agree they have been performing at 50 or 60 per cent of their capability but they receive 100 per cent in salary."
ITALY: Parma say they have agreed to sign France defender Liliam Thuram at the season's end for £3million . . . representatives of state broadcaster RAI and media magnate Vittorio Cecchi Gori come close to agreeing how to split coverage over the next three seasons.
PORTUGAL: Boavista's Romania midfielder Ion Timofte is ruled out for six months – including Euro 96 – after surgery on a broken leg and nose suffered in a league game last Sunday.
ROMANIA: Former tennis star Ilie Nastase says he would find a deal to keep Anghel Iordanescu in Romania after reports that Olympiakos are ready to sign the ex-national team coach.

WEDNESDAY 20 MARCH

ACTION: The Champions League quarter-finals end with overall victories for Juventus, Ajax, Nantes and Panathinaikos . . . Japan and Iraq both move within one victory of the Olympic finals. Japan beat the UAE 1-0 to top group A while Iraq defeat Oman 1-0 to win group B.
ARGENTINA: Diego Maradona says he will not play for Boca Juniors at the weekend because of "inhumane" playing conditions caused by the summer heat.
ENGLAND: Manchester City secure a work permit to rush Georgian striker Mikhail Kavelashvili, from Russian champions Spartak Vladikavkaz, into their fight against relegation . . . the committal begins of Bruce Grobbelaar, John Fashanu and Hans Segers, who face allegations of match-fixing which they have denied . . . Liverpool's Mark Wright is recalled to England's squad for the first time in three years while team-mate Robbie Fowler is called up for the first time, for the match against Bulgaria. Squad: Seaman, Walker, Flowers, Jones, Howey, Pearce, P Neville, M Wright, Southgate, Ehiogu, G Neville, Stone, Sinclair, Redknapp, Gascoigne, Platt, Ince, Wise, Beardsley, Fowler, Shearer, Ferdinand, Sheringham, Lee, McManaman, Barmby.
FRANCE: Marseille's veteran captain Marcel Dib says he will retire at the end of the season to join the club's scouting staff . . . UEFA secretary-general Gerhard Aigner tells a debate on the Bosman judgement in the European Parliament in Strasbourg that the verdict had thrown international soccer into chaos.
GERMANY: Bayern Munich players picked up a bonus of £17,000 each for reaching the UEFA Cup semi-finals. But an ankle ligament injury will keep Switzerland's Ciri Sforza out for six weeks . . . Bundesliga players may go to court or even move abroad if the domestic transfer system is not changed quickly, says Horst Kletke, lawyer of the players' union (the VDV).
ITALY: A new twist emerges to the television rights saga as film maker Vittorio Cecchi Gori withdraws his offer to purchase exclusive TV and radio rights to domestic leagues in favour of state-controlled RAI.
ROMANIA: Gavril Balint tries to pick up the pieces of the national team's Euro 96 preparations as caretaker following the departure of Anghel Iordanescu.
SWITZERLAND: FIFA rejects a second appeal from the Asian confederation to sanction a joint hosting by Japan and South Korea of the 2002 World Cup finals.

THURSDAY 21 MARCH

ACTION: In the Cup-winners Cup quarter final second legs Rai scores two penalties in Paris Saint-Germain's 3-1 home defeat of Parma. The French side go through 3-2 on aggregate. The others making it through to the semi-finals are Feyenoord, who beat Borussia Monchengladbach 1-0 on the night (3-2 on aggregate), Rapid Vienna, who added to their 1-0 first leg lead over Moscow Dynamo with a 3-0 home victory, and Deportivo La Coruna, who drew 1-1 with compatriots Zaragoza having won 1-0 at home in the first leg.

TRANSFER TRAIL
(Loan moves in italics)

Andreas **ANDERSSON** (F)	Degerfors	IFK Gothenburg
Jose **BASUALDO** (M)	Velez Sarsfield	Boca Juniors
Jose Luis **CALDERON** (F)	Estudiantes de La Plata	Independiente
Bent **CHRISTENSEN** (F)	Young Boys Berne	Lyngby
Garry **FLITCROFT** (M)	Manchester City	Blackburn
Niklas **GUDMUNDSSON** (F)	Halmstad BK	Blackburn
Jesper **JANSSON** (D)	AIK Stockholm	Djurgarden
John **JENSEN** (M)	Arsenal	Brondby
Mikhail **KAVELASHVILI** (F)	Spartak Vladikavkaz	Manchester City
John **NEWSOME** (D)	Norwich City	Sheffield Wed
Donald **SIE** (F)	ASEC Abidjan	Grampus 8
Bryan **SMALL** (D)	Aston Villa	Bolton
Richard **SNEEKES** (M)	Bolton Wanderers	West Brom
Bertrand **TCHAMI** (M)	San Lorenzo (Arg)	OB Odense
Liliam **THURAM*** (D)	Monaco	Parma
Juan **VERON** (F)	Estudiantes de La Plata	Boca Juniors

** = at end of this season*

MANAGERS ON THE MOVE		
Jose Maria **AMORRORTU**	Athletic Bilbao (technical director)	Athletic Bilbao
Jimmy **CALDERWOOD**	Willem II (assistant coach)	Willem II
Theo **DE JONG**	Willem II	out of contract
Benito **FLORO**	Albacete	out of contract
Vojo **GARDESEVIC**	Gor Mahia (Ken)	Kenya
Mohamed **KHERI**	Kenya	out of contract
Eckhardt **KRAUTZUN**	out of contract	Kaiserslautern
Friedl **RAUSCH**	Kaiserslautern	out of contract
Dragoslav **STEPANOVIC**	Athletic Bilbao	out of contract
Moad **YALMAZ**	Samsunspor (Tur)	Zamalek (Egy)

Crossword

WIN AN EXCLUSIVE *WORLD SOCCER* SWEATSHIRT

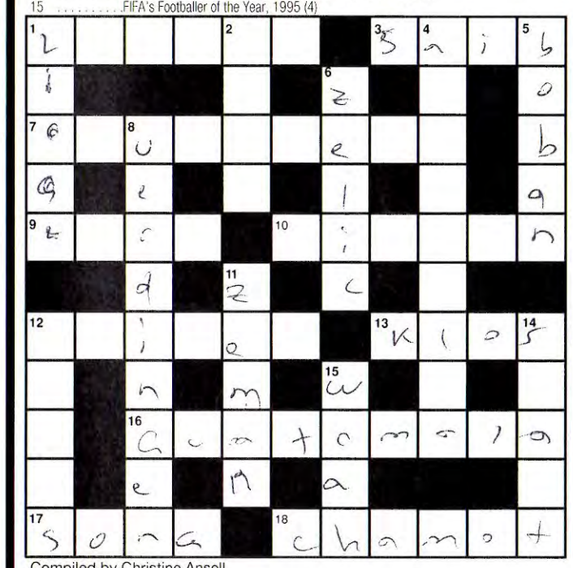
The first five correct entries will each win a WORLD SOCCER sweatshirt. Send entries by MAY 1 to: WORLD SOCCER CROSSWORD (MAY), WORLD SOCCER, King's Reach Tower, Stamford Street, London SE1 9LS

APRIL SOLUTION
ACROSS: 1. Williams 6. Thom 7. Waddle 9. Napoli 10. Assis 11. Celta 14. Traore 16. Rincon 17. Fusi 18. Cameroon
DOWN: 2. Isaias 3. Arena 4. Stapleton 5. Kohl 8. Davidovic 12. Tapoko 13. Terim 15. Roux

APRIL WINNERS
Ioan Eurig Roberts, Caernarfon; Matthew Withers, Crewe; Dan Folke Persson, Vaerloese; Derek McMonies, Dumfries; Mervyn D. Baker, Bristol.

CLUES ACROSS
1 . . . . . Gerets-coached Belgians from the Herman Vanderpoortenstadion (6)
3 . . . . . Auxerre midfield man in Algeria's 1996 African Nations Cup squad (4)
7 . . . . . N. Ireland's League champions, 1994-95 (9)
9 . . . . . Republic of Ireland's League champions, 1992-93 (4)
10 . . . . . Helsingborgs defender or midfielder recruited from Osters IF (6)
12 . . . . . Former Sion defender of Grasshopper and Switzerland (6)
13 . . . . . Borussia Dortmund 'keeper formerly with Eintracht Dortmund (4)
16 . . . . . Fourth-placed nation at the 1996 CONCACAF Gold Cup tournament (9)
17 . . . . . Metz and Cameroon defender, Rigobert (4)
18 . . . . . Lazio's Argentine defender once of Foggia (6)

CLUES DOWN
1 . . . . . Ex-Vastra Frolunda defender now in Sweden's big-time with IFK (5)
2 . . . . . Andrey's successor at Basel in Switzerland (4)
4 . . . . . Trans Tasman Cup winners, 1995-96 (9)
5 . . . . . Croatian midfield star in Italy with Milan (5)
6 . . . . . QPR's ex-Borussia Dortmund Australian on loan to Eintracht Frankfurt (5)
8 . . . . . The Bundesliga's KFC, formerly Bayer 05 (9)
11 . . . . . Czech coach whose clubs have included Foggia and Lazio (5)
12 . . . . . Coach in charge at Grasshopper from 1993 (5)
14 . . . . . Norway's Kristiansand side, champions in 1978 and 1980 (5)
15 . . . . . FIFA's Footballer of the Year, 1995 (4)



Compiled by Christine Ansell

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

_____

_____

POSTCODE _____

MAY

AUSTRIA

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 3

WEEKEND

LINZER ASK 0 RAPID WIEN 2

AUSTRIA WIEN 2 VORWARTS STEYR 0

FC TIROL 2 GRAZER AK 0

SALZBURG 0 SV RIED 3

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 10

WEEKEND

ADMIRA WACKER 1 (Mayrleb 13)
FC TIROL 4 (Zingler og 10, Kitzbichler 35, 70, Kirchler 79) Att: 1,000

GRAZER AK 1 (Penksa 45)
LINZER ASK 0 Att: 4,000

SV RIED 1 (Angerschmid 85)
AUSTRIA WIEN 0 Att: 6,000

RAPID WIEN 3 (Stumpf 21, 33, 73)
SALZBURG 1 (Kocijan 83) Att: 17,000

VORWARTS STEYR v STURM GRAZ – *postponed*

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 17

MIDWEEK

SALZBURG 1 (Jancula 54)
AUSTRIA WIEN 1 (Ogris pen 84) Att: 9,000

LINZER ASK 0
ADMIRA WACKER 0 Att: 3,000

STURM GRAZ 3 (Vastic 25, Krammer og 53, Haas 80)
SV REID 1 (Glasner 80) Att: 6.000

FC TIROL 3 (Brzeczek 31, Janeschitz 35, Schiener 73)
VORWARTS STEYR 0 Att: 3,000

WEEKEND

ADMIRA WACKER 0
RAPID WIEN 0 Att: 9,500

AUSTRIA WIEN 0
STURM GRAZ 1 (Haas 80) Att: 5,000

GRAZER AK 2 (Zisser 82, Hiden og 86)
SALZBURG 1 (Hasenhuttl 31) Att: 5,000

SV REID 0
FC TIROL 6 (Krinner 30, 46, 57, Brzeczek 44, Janeschitz 61, Kitzbichler 80) Att: 6,000

VORWARTS STEYR 1 (Walentic 28)
LINZER ASK 2 (T. Weissenberger 13, Metlitsky 60) Att: 3,000

AUSTRIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rapid Wien	22	14	4	4	39	23	46
Sturm Graz	21	13	4	4	42	20	43
FC Tirol	22	10	5	7	42	27	35
Grazer AK	22	8	8	6	27	23	32
Austria Wien	22	8	7	7	26	20	31
Linzer ASK	22	8	6	8	20	18	30
SV Salzburg	22	6	10	6	31	29	28
SV Ried	22	7	7	8	26	34	28
Admira Wacker	22	3	10	9	20	35	19
Vorwarts Steyr	21	0	3	18	14	58	3

BELGIUM

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25

MIDWEEK

BELGIAN CUP - QUARTER-FINALS

ANTWERP 3 (Dewaele og 28, Severeyns 47, Owolabi 89)
WAREGEM 0

CERCLE BRUGES 2 (Lauwers 76 Torma 119)
BEERSCHOT 1 (Luyingu 83) *Aet*

CLUB BRUGGE 2 (Verheyen 28, Stanic 106)
TILLEUR LUIK 1 (Varga 73) *Aet*

ANDERLECHT v ST TRUIDEN – *postponed*

WEEKEND

POSTPONED: **CHARLEROI v STANDARD, CLUB BRUGGE v HARELBEKE, EENDRACHT AALST v CERCLE BRUGES, EKEREN v GENT, MECHELEN v BEVEREN, RWDM v LIERSE, SERAING v ANTWERP, ST TRUIDEN v LOMMEL, WAREGEM v ANDERLECHT.**

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 3

WEEKEND

STANDARD LIEGE 0
EKEREN 0 Att: 25,000

LOMMEL 0
SERAING 1 (Edmilson 57) Att: 4,500

CERCLE BRUGES 0
CHARLEROI 2 (Fiers 13, Gerard 75) Att: 3,500

ANTWERP 0
CLUB BRUGGE 3 (Verhyen 69, Spehar 81, Staelens 85) Att: 12,000

LIERSE 3 (Rekdal 19, 89, Lehmann 79)
AALST 1 (Ebiede 83) Att: 6,000

HARELBEKE 0
MECHELEN 0 Att: 6,000

RWDM 4 (Nyyssonen 51, Camus 72, Pierre 85, 88)
WAREGEM 1 (Camara 38) Att: 4,700

BEVEREN 0
ANDERLECHT 2 (Bosman 58, 84) Att: 8,000

GENT 0
ST TRUIDEN 1 (Coenen 75) Att: 7,000

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 10

WEEKEND

ST TRUIDEN 3 (Van Houdt 20, 73, Petersen 81)
STANDARD 1 (Goossens 50) Att: 10,000

ANDERLECHT 1 (Versavel 16)
HARELBEKE 3 (Ngonge 27, 34, 56 pen) Att: 19,000

CHARLEROI 1 (Goossen og 26)
LIERSE 1 (Lehmann 89) Att: 9,000

MECHELEN 0
ANTWERP 1 (Severeyns 75) Att: 7,000

SERAING 2 (Lawaree 42, 55)
GENT 2 (Dauwen 40, Martens 74) At: 3,500

CLUB BRUGGE 2 (Verheyen 49, Spehar 55)
LOMMEL 0 Att: 13,000

EENDRACHT AALST 1 (Paas 57)
RWDM 1 (Haydock 73) Att: 7,000

EKEREN 1 (Hofmans 61)
CERCLE BRUGES 0 Att: 4,000

WAREGEM 1 (Camara 89)
BEVEREN 4 (Udovic 41, 79, Goots 66, Smid 75) Att: 3,500

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 17

MIDWEEK

BELGIAN CUP - QUARTER-FINAL

ANDERLECHT 0
ST TRUIDEN 1 (Nielsen 8) Att: 8,000

WEEKEND

RWDM 3 (Pierre 20, Wuyts 86, Sabbadini 88)
CHARLEROI 1 (Van Meir 87) Att: 6,000

LIERSE 2 (Peeters 29, 79)
EKEREN 1 (Hofmans 85) Att: 7,500

LOMMEL 2 (Van Veldhoven 41, Van Geneugden 69)
MECHELEN 1 (Valgaeren 27) Att: 6,000

STANDARD 3 (Goossens 5, 64, Wilmots 85)
SERAING 0 Att: 10,000

GENT 0
CLUB BRUGGE 2 (Vermant 18, Stanic 47) Att: 13,000

ANTWERP 1 (Porte 78)
ANDERLECHT 1 (Peiremans 70) Att: 10,000

CERCLE BRUGES 2 (Torma 54, Cooreman 56)
ST TRUIDEN 1 (Van Houdt 18) Att: 3,300

EENDRACHT AALST 1 (Meyssen pen 85)
WAREGEM 1 (Kubica 74) Att: 5,000

HARELBEKE 1 (De Tollenaere 59)
BEVEREN 0 Att: 3,400

BELGIUM

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Club Brugge	28	21	5	2	69	23	68
Anderlecht	28	18	4	6	71	30	58
Lierse	28	12	10	6	44	33	46
RWD Molenbeek	28	11	11	6	35	27	44
Ekeren	28	11	8	9	41	32	41
Standard Liege	28	10	11	7	41	33	41
Cercle Brugge	28	10	10	8	42	39	40
Lommel	28	11	5	12	31	39	38
Charleroi	28	9	11	8	47	45	38
Harelbeke	28	11	4	13	32	36	37
Antwerp	28	10	7	11	33	36	37
Mechelen	28	10	6	12	31	39	36
St Truiden	28	10	5	13	39	48	35
Gent	28	8	9	11	32	42	33
Seraing	28	8	5	15	35	53	29
Eendracht Aalst	28	7	8	13	36	51	29
Beveren	28	5	7	16	28	45	22
Waregem	28	3	8	17	25	61	17

ENGLAND

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25

MIDWEEK

WEST HAM 2 (Williamson 7, Cottee 82)
NEWCASTLE 0 Att: 23,843

MAN UTD 2 (Keane 30, Giggs 82)
EVERTON 0 Att: 42,459

COCA-COLA [LEAGUE] CUP - SEMI-FINALS, 2ND LEG

ASTON VILLA 0
ARSENAL 0 Att: 39,334
Agg: 2-2, Aston Villa won on away goals

LEEDS 3 (Masinga 54, Yeboah 56, Deane 86)
BIRMINGHAM 0 Att: 35,435
Leeds United won 5-1 on agg

FA CUP - 5TH RND

GRIMSBY TOWN 0 CHELSEA 0

LEEDS 0 PORT VALE 0

NOTTM F v TOTTENHAM – *abandoned*

WEEKEND

BLACKBURN 2 (Wilcox 25, Sherwood 83)
LIVERPOOL 3 (Collymore 10, 21, Thomas 70) Att: 30,895

COVENTRY 0
MIDDLESBROUGH 0 Att: 18,810

EVERTON 3 (Kanchelskis 52, Watson 56, Ferguson 60)
NOTTM FOREST 0 Att: 33,163

MAN CITY 3 (Quinn 16, 62, Rosler 77)
NEWCASTLE 3 (Albert 45, 81, Asprilla 71) Att: 31,115

SOUTHAMPTON 2 (Widdrington 7, Clarke og 39)
CHELSEA 3 (Wise 22, 28, Gullit 53) Att: 15,226

TOTTENHAM 1 (Armstrong 32)
SHEFFIELD WED 0 Att: 32,047

WEST HAM 0
ARSENAL 1 (Hartson 2) Att: 24,217

WIMBLEDON 3 (Goodman 10, 48, Harford 90)
ASTON VILLA 3 (Reeves og 33, Yorke pen 49, Cunningham 57 og) Att: 12,193

BOLTON 0
MAN UTD 6 (Beckham 5, Bruce 15, Cole 70, Scholes 77, 80, Butt 90) Att: 21,381

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 3

MIDWEEK

ASTON VILLA 2 (Joachim 55, Southgate 71)
BLACKBURN 0 Att: 28,008

FA CUP - 5TH RND

LIVERPOOL 2 (Fowler 12, Collymore 59)
CHARLTON 1 (Grant 87) Att: 36,818

NOTTM FOREST 2 (Woan 3, 72)
TOTTENHAM 2 (Armstrong 8, 27) Att: 18,600

SOUTHAMPTON 2 (Oakley 62, Shipperley 76)
SWINDON 0 Att: 13,962

WIMBLEDON 3 (Ekoku 9, Goodman 40, 84)
HUDDERSFIELD 1 (Booth 8) Att: 7,015

FA CUP - 5TH RND REPLAYS

PORT VALE 1 (Naylor 37)
LEEDS 2 (McAllister 64, 88) Att: 14,023

CHELSEA 4 (Duberry 21, Hughes 54, Spencer 56, Peacock 58)
GRIMSBY 1 (Groves 55) Att: 28,545

WEEKEND

LIVERPOOL 3 (McManaman 2, Fowler 5, 8)
ASTON VILLA 0 Att: 39,508

TOTTENHAM 1 (Dozzell 64)
SOUTHAMPTON 0 Att: 26,320

MIDDLESBROUGH 0
EVERTON 2 (Grant 28, Hinchliffe 45 pen) Att: 29,807

QPR 1 (Gallen 20)
ARSENAL 1 (Bergkamp 49) Att: 17,970

WIMBLEDON 1 (Clarke 37)
CHELSEA 1 (Furlong 35) Att: 17,048

SHEFFIELD WED 1 (Kovacevic 50)
NOTTM FOREST 3 (Howe 10, McGregor 46, Roy 80) Att: 21,930

MAN CITY 1 (Lomas 84)
BLACKBURN 1 (Shearer 57) Att: 29,078

COVENTRY 2 (Salako 7, N. Whelan 15)
WEST HAM 2 (Cottee 2, Rieper 22) Att: 17,459

LEEDS 0
BOLTON 1 (Bergsson 16) Att: 30,106

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 10

MIDWEEK

NEWCASTLE 0
MAN UNITED 1 (Cantona 51) Att: 36,584

ARSENAL 3 (Hartson 29, 55, Dixon 41)
MAN CITY 1 (Creaney 54) Att: 34,519

ASTON VILLA 3 (Milosevic 61, 62, Townsend 75)
SHEFFIELD WED 2 (Blinker 8, 63) Att: 27,893

QPR 1 (Gallen 31)
LEEDS 2 (Yeboah 11, 26) Att: 13,991

WEEKEND

ASTON VILLA 4 (Milosevic 18, Yorke 65, 80, Yates og 82)
QPR 2 (Dichio 50, Gallen 59) Att: 28,221

EVERTON 2 (Ferguson 17, 25)
COVENTRY 2 (Daish 38, Williams 85) Att: 34,517

WEST HAM 2 (Dowie 2, Dicks pen 60)
MIDDLESBROUGH 0 Att: 23,850

FA CUP - 5TH RND REPLAY

TOTTENHAM 1 (Sheringham 33)
NOTTM FOREST 1 (Roy 10) Att: 31,055
Aet, Forest won 3-1 on pens

FA CUP - QUARTER-FINALS

CHELSEA 2 (Hughes 70, Gullit 81)
WIMBLEDON 2 (Earle 54, Holdsworth 82) Att: 30,805.

LEEDS UTD 0
LIVERPOOL 0 Att: 24,632

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 17

MIDWEEK

CHELSEA 1 (Gullit 23)
MAN CITY 1 (Clough 42) Att: 17,078

LIVERPOOL 2 (McManaman 35, Collymore 68)
WIMBLEDON 2 (Ekoku 54, Holdsworth 60) Att: 34,063

BLACKBURN 1 (Fenton 47)
LEEDS 0 Att: 23,358

FA CUP - QUARTER-FINALS

MAN UTD 2 (Cantona 49, Sharpe 90)
SOUTHAMPTON 0 Att: 45,446

NOTTM FOREST 0
ASTON VILLA 1 (Carr 26) Att: 21,067

WEEKEND

COVENTRY 0
BOLTON 2 (Stubbs 66, 70) Att: 17,226

LIVERPOOL 2 (Wright 53, Fowler 62)
CHELSEA 0 Att: 40,820

MAN CITY 2 (Kinkladze 32, 38)
SOUTHAMPTON 1 (Tisdale 64) Att: 29,550

MIDDLESBROUGH 1 (Mustoe 57)
NOTTM FOREST 1 (Allen 56) Att: 29,392

QPR 1 (Irwin og 64)
MAN UTD 1 (Cantona 90) Att: 18,817

SHEFFIELD WED 2 (Whittingham 58, Hirst 87)
ASTON VILLA 0 Att: 22,964

TOTTENHAM 2 (Sheringham 62, Armstrong 80)
BLACKBURN 3 (Shearer pen 8, 34, 90) Att: 32,387

WIMBLEDON 0
ARSENAL 3 (Winterburn 61, Platt 65, Bergkamp 83) Att: 18,335

LEEDS 2 (Deane 6, 45)
EVERTON 2 (Stuart 28, Kanchelskis 50) Att: 29,425

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man United	32	20	7	5	59	30	67
Newcastle	30	20	4	6	55	28	64
Liverpool	31	17	8	6	60	27	59
Aston Villa	32	16	8	8	46	30	56
Arsenal	32	15	9	8	44	28	54
Tottenham	31	14	9	8	40	31	51
Everton	32	13	9	10	50	38	48
Blackburn	31	14	6	11	47	36	48
Nottm Forest	30	12	11	7	40	40	47
Chelsea	32	11	12	9	37	35	45
West Ham	32	13	6	13	39	44	45
Leeds United	29	11	6	12	35	42	39
Middlesbrough	32	9	9	14	29	42	36
Sheffield Wed	32	9	8	15	43	51	35
Wimbledon	31	7	9	15	46	63	30
Man City	32	7	9	16	26	49	30
Coventry	30	5	12	13	37	55	27
Southampton	29	5	10	14	28	43	25
Bolton	32	7	4	21	35	62	25
QPR	32	6	6	20	28	50	24

FRANCE

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25

MIDWEEK

FRENCH CUP - 3RD RND

AUXERRE 3 PARIS SG 1

BLENOD 0 MARSEILLE 2

NIORT 0 STRASBOURG 1

THOUARS 0 NIMES 2

VALENCE 1 LAVAL 0

LILLE 1 MONACO 1
Lille won 5-4 on pens

CAEN 5 SOCHAUX 0

TOULON 1 MONTPELLIER 1
Montpellier won 4-1 on pens

WEEKEND

GUEUGNON 1 (Chandioux 61)
ST ETIENNE 0 Att: 6,836

METZ v LYON – *postponed*

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 3

WEEKEND

PARIS SG 1 (Loko 35)
LENS 0 Att: 44,526

AUXERRE 0
METZ 0 Att: 12,000

GUINGAMP 0
MONACO 0 Att: 13,208

LILLE 1 (Dindeleux 26)
MONTPELLIER 1 (Der Zakarian 5) Att: 7,500

NANTES 1 (Renou 70)
GUEUGNON 0 Att: 15,000

BASTIA v RENNES – *postponed*

BORDEAUX 1 (R Witschge 6)
STRASBOURG 1 (Baticle 85) Att: 12,000

MARTIGUES 0
LE HAVRE 1 (Uvenard 35) Att: 1,000

ST ETIENNE 1 (Sechet 40)
LYON 1 (Giuly 10) Att: 17,870

NICE 1 (Debbah 41)
CANNES 2 (Capoue 3, Horlaville 34) Att: 4,251

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 10

MIDWEEK

METZ 0
LYON 1 (Maurice 50) Att: 17,112

STRASBOURG 1 (Baticle 75)
AUXERRE 0 Att: 15,862

WEEKEND

BASTIA 1 (Drobnjak 35)
MONTPELLIER 0 Att: 3,512

BORDEAUX 4 (Zidane 6, 12, Tholot 41, Dugarry 86)
METZ 0 Att: 14,000

GUEUGNON 2 (Traore 33, Chandioux 72)
MONACO 2 (Anderson da Silva 79, 87) Att: 8,138

GUNGAMP 3 (Gravelaine 57, Coridon 67, Rouxel 71)
STRASBOURG 0 Att: 7,000

LILLE 0
RENNES 0 Att: 8,000

MARTIGUES 0
LENS 1 (Vairelles 73) Att: 4,000

NANTES 2 (Decroix 41, Ouedec 54)
CANNES 0 Att: 15,278

NICE 1 (Ipoua 45)
AUXERRE 3 (Blanc 25, Laslandes 44, Diomede 57) Att: 4,756

ST ETIENNE 2 (Loko 41, Ngotty 77)
LYON 0 Att: 36,800

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 17

MIDWEEK

FRENCH CUP - QUARTER-FINALS

MONTPELLIER 1 (Petit 8)
CAEN 0 Att: 7,330

MARSEILLE 1 (Ferrer pen 79)
LILLE 0 Att: 26,000

NIMES 3 (Gros 32, Perez 35, Sabin 112)
STRASBOURG 2 (Frankowski 11, Mostovoi 69) *Aet*

VALENCE 0
AUXERRE 2 (Blanc 22, Diomede 56) Att: 14,082

WEEKEND

RENNES 0
METZ 0 Att: 8,576

ST ETIENNE 2 (Despeyroux 70, Sandjak 83)
CANNES 2 (Horlaville 31, Despeyroux og 72) Att: 8,000

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Paris SG	32	17	9	6	54	28	60
Auxerre	32	18	4	10	54	27	58
Lens	32	14	13	5	38	22	55
Metz	31	15	10	6	32	21	55
Monaco	31	14	10	7	46	30	52
Montpellier	31	13	9	9	42	34	48
Strasbourg	32	12	11	9	43	35	47
Guingamp	31	12	11	8	29	24	47
Rennes	31	12	11	8	37	35	47
Nantes	32	12	11	9	37	36	47
Le Havre	32	11	9	12	30	37	42
Lyon	32	9	14	9	35	35	41
Bastia	31	12	5	14	41	42	41
Cannes	32	10	7	15	38	45	37
Bordeaux	32	10	6	16	39	46	36
Nice	32	9	8	15	31	40	35
Lille	32	6	12	14	23	42	30
St Etienne	32	5	14	13	31	49	29
Gueugnon	32	5	12	15	22	43	27
Martigues	32	6	4	22	22	53	22

GERMANY

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25

WEEKEND

BAYER LEVERKUSEN 0
BORUSSIA MG 0 Att: 21,000

KAISERSLAUTERN 0
ST PAULI 0 Att: 31,500

BORUSSIA DORTMUND 1 (Berger 55)
HANSA ROSTOCK 2 (Baumgart 45, Akpoborie 54) Att: 42,000

FORTUNA 2 (Pancev 6, Seeliger 63)
SCHALKE 0 Att: 23,000

FREIBURG 2 (Todt 26, Decheiver 74)

STUTTGART 1 (Poschner 76) Att: 22,500

KARLSRUHE 1 (Metz 15)
WERDER BREMEN 1 (Hobsch 34) Att: 22,000

1860 MUNICH 3 (Trares 27, 44, Cerny 86)
EINTRACHT FRANKFURT 1 (Hagner 47) Att: 28,000

KFC UERDINGEN 1 (Meijer 86)
BAYERN MUNICH 6 (Helmer 19, Strunz 52, 88, Klinsmann 57, Zickler 62, Scholl 85) Att: 30,000

HAMBURG v KOLN – *postponed*

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 3

MIDWEEK

GERMAN CUP - SEMI-FINALS

KAISERSLAUTERN 1 (Kadlec 34)
BAYER LEVERKUSEN 0

KARLSRUHE 2 (Kiriakov 16, Hassler 79)
FORTUNA DUSSELDORF 0

WEEKEND

BAYERN MUNICH 4 (Klinsmann 7, 26, Zickler 9, 20)
MUNICH 1860 2 (Bodden 33, Winkler 64) Att: 69,000

BORUSSIA MG 2 (Dahlin 27, 63)
BORUSSIA DORTMUND 2 (Riedle 57, Kohler 90) Att: 33,500

STUTTGART 2 (Elber 57, Haber 83)
KAISERSLAUTERN 0 Att: 25,000

SCHALKE 3 (Anderbrugge 6, Max 12, 48)
HAMBURG 0 Att: 29,300

HANSA ROSTOCK 0
FORTUNA DUSSELDORF 0 Att: 50,183

ST PAULI v LEVERKUSEN – *postponed*

KOLN 0
KARLSRUHE 1 (Kiriakov 72) Att: 18,000

EINTRACHT FRANKFURT 1 (Rath 79)
SC FREIBURG 0 Att: 15,000

WERDER BREMEN 1 (Basler 45)
KFC UERDINGEN 0 Att: 23,900

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 10

MIDWEEK

SCHALKE 0
KOLN 0 Att: 33,800

ST PAULI 1 (Sobotzik 30)
SC FREIBURG 1 (Wassmer 60) Att: 19,877

WERDER BREMEN 2 (Scholz 3, Cardoso 31)
HAMBURG 1 (Sporl 18) Att: 29,000

BAYER LEVERKUSEN 0
STUTTGART 0 Att: 21,400

HAMBURG 4 (Ivanauskas 57, Jahnig 66, Baron 77, Albertz pen 84)
FORTUNA DUSSELDORF 1 (Tonello 89) Att: 19,481

WEEKEND

BORUSSIA DORTMUND 1 (Zorc 63)
ST PAULI 0 Att: 42,800

SC FREIBURG 3 (Decheiver 43, 51, Todt 88)
BAYERN MUNICH 1 (Klinsmann pen 16) Att: 22,500

KAISERSLAUTERN 1 (M. Wagner 48)
EINTRACHT FRANKFURT 1 (Schupp 89) Att: 37,533

KARLSRUHE 0
SCHALKE 1 (Mulder 39) Att: 27,000

MUNICH 1860 1 (Winkler pen 20)
WERDER BREMEN 1 (Cardoso pen 73) Att: 33,200

KFC UERDINGEN 1 (Lesniak 1)
KOLN 1 (Polster pen 75) Att: 15,000

BORUSSIA MG 3 (Effenberg 17, Pettersson 24, Kastenmaier 49 pen)
HANSA ROSTOCK 2 (Beinlich pen 22, Micevski 62) Att: 27,500

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 17

MIDWEEK

FORTUNA DUSSELDORF 1 (Cyron 57)
WERDER BREMEN 1 (Labbadia 64) Att: 12,000

WEEKEND

KOLN 2 (Kohn 47, Goldbaek 80)
MUNICH 1860 0 Att: 21,000

WERDER BREMEN 0
SC FREIBURG 2 (Decheiver 53, 90) Att: 28,441

BAYERN MUNICH 2 (A. Herzog 12, Ziege 68)
KAISERSLAUTERN 0 Att: 61,000

EINTRACHT FRANKFURT 1 (Doll pen 89)
BAYER LEVERKUSEN 1 (Fach 90) Att: 19,300

FORTUNA DUSSELDORF 2 (Bach 25, 90 pen)
KARLSRUHE 0 Att: 11,000

ST PAULI 0
BORUSSIA MG 2 (Kastenmaier 53, Effenberg 87) Att: 20,000

SCHALKE 1 (Linke 67)
KFC UERDINGEN 1 (Passlack 77) Att: 35,100

STUTTGART 0

BORUSSIA DORTMUND 5 (Riedle 17, Zorc 41, Chapuisat 51, 78, Ricken 80) Att: 51,000

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bor. Dortmund	23	15	6	2	60	25	51
Bayern Munich	24	16	2	6	53	31	50
Borussia MG	23	11	5	7	36	36	38
VfB Stuttgart	24	9	9	6	48	45	36
Schalke	23	8	10	5	27	27	34
Hamburg	23	8	9	6	37	33	33
SC Freiburg	24	9	6	9	23	26	33
Bayer Leverkusen	22	7	10	5	26	18	31
Hansa Rostock	22	7	8	7	34	31	29
1860 Munich	24	7	8	9	34	37	29
Karlsruhe	24	7	8	9	33	36	29
Werder Bremen	24	5	12	7	23	29	27
Eintracht Frankfurt	24	6	8	10	34	46	26
St Pauli	23	6	7	10	31	37	25
Fort. Dusseldorf	24	5	10	9	25	35	25
Koln	24	4	12	8	21	26	24
Kaiserslautern	23	3	12	8	20	30	21
KFC Uerdingen	24	2	10	12	22	39	16

HOLLAND

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25

WEEKEND

FORTUNA SITTARD 0
SPARTA ROTTERDAM 1 (Dennis de Nooijer 45) Att: 4,500

NAC 2 (Gaasbeek 63, Scheepers 69)
NEC 1 (Hoekman 78) Att: 8,724

AJAX 6 (Kluivert 20, 71, R de Boer 23, Hoekstra 46, Kanu 54, Blind 56)
HEERENVEEN 2 (Wouden 84, 87) Att: 19,650

FC TWENTE v WILLEM II – *postponed*

UTRECHT v GA EAGLES – *postponed*

VITESSE v DE GRAAFSCHAP – *postponed*

VOLENDAM v GRONINGEN – *postponed*

RODA JC v RKC – *postponed*

FEYENOORD 0
PSV 0 Att: 28,052

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 3

MIDWEEK

GA EAGLES 2 (Tammer 9, Heering 17)
NEC 2 (Van Eijkeren 37, Sumiala 49) Att: 5,000

DE GRAAFSCHAP 2 (Viscaal 15, 85 pen)
HEERENVEEN 2 (Regtop 2, Tomasson 26 pen) Att: 6,000

WEEKEND

PSV 3 (Eijkelkamp 3, Nilis 42, Van der Doelen 71)
RODA 0 Att: 26.500

WILLEM II 1 (Van Hintum 87 pen)
VOLENDAM 0 Att: 6,750

SPARTA 3 (D de Nooijer 31, Groenendijk 53, Van der Laan 63)
NAC 1 (Gaasbeek 32) Att: 5,750

GA EAGLES 2 (Schenning 50, Bijl 69)
FORTUNA SITTARD 0 Att: 5,750

GRONINGEN 1 (R. Koeman 80 og)
FEYENOORD 0 Att: 14,105

HEERENVEEN 4 (Tomasson 35, 67, Echteld 52, Regtop 82)
NEC 1 (Van Eijkeren 34) Att: 13,000

VITESSE ARNHEM 2 (Laros 9, 69)
AJAX 1 (Kluivert 87) Att: 11,400

FC TWENTE 1 (Ellerman 90)
DE GRAAFSCHAP 0 Att: 6,500

UTRECHT 0
RKC 0 Att: 5,000

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 10

WEEKEND

RKC 1 (Petrovic 22)
PSV 3 (Nilis 10, Stam 40, Vink 45) Att: 4,800

DE GRAAFSCHAP 1 (Viscaal 28)
VOLENDAM 0 Att: 6,650

NAC 2 (Scheepers 54, 68)
GA EAGLES 0 Att: 9,127

RODA JC 0
GRONINGEN 0 Att: 6,200

SPARTA 5 (Jalink 2, G. de Nooijer 37, Van der Laan 53, Krijgsman 78, Van der Hoeven 86)
HEERENVEEN 2 (Tomasson 32, Korneev 65) Att: 4,500

AJAX 6 (F. de Boer 37, Davids 39, Kluivert 50, Ajoupov 54, Musampa 64, Hoestra 66)
FC TWENTE 1 (Ten Caat 67) Att: 19,318

FEYENOORD 3 (V. Bronckhorst 19, 83, Bosz 41)
UTRECHT 0 Att: 23,106

NEC 0
VITESSE 1 (Shoukov 53) Att: 5,900

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 17

WEEKEND

NEC 1 (Poutilo 89)
FC TWENTE 4 (Bosvelt 37, Petrov 55, Ten Caat 81, Ellerman 82) Att: 2,500

FORTUNA SITTARD 2 (Van der Weert 75, Jeffrey 83)
NAC 2 (Lokhoff 89, Abdellaoui 90) Att: 5,400

GA EAGLES 2 (Tammer 74, Schenning 83)
HEERENVEEN 3 (Tomasson 39, Regtop 75, Wouden 78) Att: 6,750

PSV 0
UTRECHT 0 Att: 26,300

WILLEM II 1 (Lammers 77)
RODA JC 2 (Van Galen 64, Roelofsen 66) Att: 6,700

DE GRAAFSCHAP 1 (Van de Brink 22)
FEYENOORD 1 (Vos 66) Att: 9,000

GRONINGEN 1 (Huizingh 76)
RKC 1 (Van Arum 37) Att: 11,500

VITESSE 3 (Makaay 27, Shoukov 43, Curovic 84)
SPARTA 2 (Van der Laan 41, Groenendijk 46) Att: 7,969

VOLENDAM 0
AJAX 0 Att: 8,500

HOLLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ajax	26	21	3	2	82	15	66
PSV	26	19	4	3	81	15	61
Feyenoord	27	12	8	7	50	33	44
NAC Breda	27	11	10	6	46	29	43
Heerenveen	27	11	10	6	51	50	43
Vitesse Arnhem	26	12	6	8	41	38	42
Sparta Rotterdam	27	11	8	8	44	44	41
Roda JC	27	10	10	7	33	31	40
Groningen	27	8	13	6	32	35	37
Willem II	25	9	9	7	44	35	36
FC Twente	26	10	6	10	35	42	36
RKC Waalwijk	27	9	8	10	33	38	35
Fortuna Sittard	27	5	9	13	21	47	24
GA Eagles	25	5	7	13	35	47	22
De Graafschap	27	4	8	15	30	56	20
NEC Nijmegen	28	4	7	17	27	65	19
Volendam	25

Lantignotti 30)
BARI 2 (Andersson 7, Protti 21 pen) Att: 15,000
ATALANTA 1 (Pisani 78)
CREMONESE 1 (Maspero 82) Att: 17,000

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 10
WEEKEND
BARI 1 (Andersson 41)
FIORENTINA 1 (Baiano pen 86) Att: 20,428
CREMONESE 1 (Tentoni 21)
NAPOLI 1 (Buso 5) Att: 6,286
JUVENTUS 4 (Deschamps 35, Chamot og 70, Conte 72, Padovano 82)
LAZIO 2 (Favalli 4, Casiraghi 18) Att: 39,689
MILAN 0
INTER 1 (Branca 6) Att: 77,458
PIACENZA 2 (Caccia 3, 45 pen)
PARMA 1 (Arioli 70) Att: 11,826
AS ROMA 1 (Balbo pen 16)
CAGLIARI 1 (Oliveira pen 9) Att: 48,284
SAMPDORIA 3 (Chiesa 3, 24, 54)
PADOVA 1 (Vlaovic 46) Att: 22,563
UDINESE 3 (Poggi 70, 81, Bierhoff 80)
ATALANTA 0 Att: 10,837
VICENZA 2 (Otero 3, 88)
TORINO 1 (Angloma 9) Att: 17,340

ITALY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Milan	26	16	8	2	44	17	56
Juventus	26	14	6	6	46	25	48
Fiorentina	26	13	8	5	41	24	47
Internazionale	26	12	8	6	34	19	44
Parma	26	11	10	5	35	25	43
Lazio	26	11	6	9	48	33	39
AS Roma	26	10	9	7	33	25	39
Vicenza	26	10	8	8	29	27	38
Sampdoria	26	9	8	9	40	39	35
Udinese	26	9	7	10	30	33	34
Cagliari	26	9	5	12	28	40	32
Napoli	26	7	10	9	23	33	31
Atalanta	26	8	6	12	29	42	30
Piacenza	26	7	7	12	26	44	28
Torino	26	5	10	11	25	37	25
Cremonese	26	4	10	12	30	39	22
Bari	26	5	7	14	37	55	22
Padova	26	6	3	17	29	50	21

PORTUGAL

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25
WEEKEND
PORTUGUESE CUP - QUARTER-FINALS
OLHANENSE 1 (Xabregas 19)
SPORTING LISBON 2 (Paulo Alves 10, Sa Pinto 90)
FC PORTO 2 (Joao Manuel Pinto 50, 76)
PENAFIEL 0
UNIAO LEIRIA 2 (Reinalo 3, Mauricio 5)
MARITIMO 1 (Edmilson 38)
BENFICA 1 (Marcelo Cipriano 114)
VITORIA GUIMARAES 0 *Aet*

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 3
WEEKEND
AMADORA 1 (Renato 48)
SALGUEIROS 1 (Basilo 10)
GIL VICENTE 1 (Jaime Cerqueira 12)
BENFICA 2 (Joao Pinto 6, Marcelo 45)
FC PORTO 6 (Edmilson 7, 31, 40, Drulovic 21, 90, Folha 85)
SPORTING BRAGA 3 (Barros 20 pen, 28 pen, Jose Nuno 53)
GUIMARAES 2 (Capucho 69, Emerson 82)
TIRSENSE 1 (Rebelo 32)
BELENENSES 4 (Fertout 1, Tulipa 27, Robson 30 og, Barny 44)
MARITIMO 1 (Humberto 35)
CHAVES 2 (Miner 38, Rui Alberto 48)
FARENSE 1 (Djukic 83)
LECA 4 (Jose Rocha 36, Ricardo 44, Constantino 50, 57 pen)
CAMPOMAIORENSE 1 (Jimmy 6)
BOAVISTA 4 (Zoran Ban 2, 52, Rui Bento 62, Sergio Duarte 74)
FELGUEIRAS 0
SPORTING LISBON 0
UNIAO LEIRIA 0

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 10
WEEKEND
TIRSENSE 0
AMADORA 0
COMPOMAIORENSE 0
FC PORTO 1 (Edmilson 90)
BENFICA 2 (Joao Pinto 3, Marcelo Cipriano 37)
CHAVES 0
FELGUEIRAS 0
GUIMARAES 3 (Ricardo 69, Gilmar 82, 85)
MARITIMO 0
SPORTING 5 (Oceano 22, Paulo Alves 32, Nelson 52, Yordanov 82, 88)
SALGUEIROS 1 (Nilton 84)
BELENENSES 3 (Cesar Brito 58, 86, Taira 80)
SPORTING BRAGA 2 (Vado 42, Lino 84)
BOAVISTA 0
FARENSE 2 (Djukic pen 39, 85)
LECA 0
UNIAO LEIRIA 2 (Ayew 72, Mauricio 77)
GIL VICENTE 0

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 17
WEEKEND
FC PORTO 2 (Joao Manuel Pinto 87)
FARENSE 0
AMADORA 0
GUIMARAES 0
SPORTING 2 (Pedro Barbosa 6, Yardanov 73)
SALGUEIROS 2 (Abilio 22, Luis Carlos 86)
BELENENSES 1 (Catanha 8)
TIRSENSE 1 (Batista 90)
BOAVISTA 4 (Litos 26, Artur 73, Helder 77, Nuno Gomes 87)
CAMPOMAIORENSE 0
CHAVES 0
UNIAO LEIRIA 1 (Porfirio 71)
GIL VICENTE 1 (Lim 70)
MARTIMO 0
LECA 0
BENFICA 0
SPORT. BRAGA 2 (Baltasar 56, Karoglan 88)
FELGUEIRAS 0

PORTUGAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Porto	27	22	4	1	72	13	70
Benfica	27	17	6	4	43	24	57
Boavista	26	16	6	4	49	19	54
Sporting Lisbon	27	15	8	4	55	20	53
Vit. Guimaraes	26	13	5	8	41	27	44
Belenenses	26	12	7	7	41	24	43
Uniao Leiria	26	12	3	11	31	40	39
Sporting Braga	26	10	7	9	34	34	37
Maritimo	26	11	4	11	34	40	37
Salgueiros	26	6	13	7	30	33	31
Estrela Amadora	26	5	11	10	25	38	26
Gil Vicente	26	6	8	12	23	39	26
Leca	26	7	5	14	22	39	26
Felgueiras	26	6	7	13	24	40	25
Tirsense	27	5	9	13	21	40	24
Desp. Chaves	26	5	6	15	27	45	21
Farense	26	6	3	17	23	39	21
Campomaiorense	26	5	2	19	19	60	17

SCOTLAND

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25
MIDWEEK
SCOTTISH CUP - 4TH RND REPLAY
FORFAR 0 AIRDRIE 0
Aet, Airdrie won 4-2 on pens
WEEKEND
CELTIC 4 (Grant 8, Van Hooijdonk 26, 81 pen, Wieghorst 88)
PARTICK THISTLE 0 Att: 37,017
HIBERNIAN 2 (Evans 49, Wright 87)
FALKIRK 1 (Kirk pen 67) Att: 7,581
KILMARNOCK 0
HEARTS 2 (Colquhoun 29, Robertson 44) Att: 8,022
MOTHERWELL 1 (Falconer 60)
RAITH ROVERS 0 Att: 5,569
ABERDEEN 0
RANGERS 1 (Gascoigne pen 32) Att: 21,000

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 3
WEEKEND
ABERDEEN 3 (Booth 34, 51, Miller 72)
KILMARNOCK 0 Att: 7,000
MOTHERWELL 1 (Falconer 40)
FALKIRK 0 Att: 5,037
CELTIC 4 (McStay 7, Van Hooijdonk 12, McLaughlin 17, Donnelly 85)
HEARTS 0 Att: 37,193
PARTICK THISTLE 0
RAITH ROVERS 3 (Cameron 39, Duffield 63, Kirkwood 68 pen) Att: 2,320
HIBERNIAN 0
RANGERS 2 (Mitchel 31 og, B. Laudrup 70 pen) Att: 11,954

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 10
MIDWEEK
SCOTTISH CUP - 5TH RND
ST JOHNSTONE 1 (O'Boyle 51)
HEARTS 2 (Lawrence 45, McPherson 57) Att: 9,951
WEEKEND
SCOTTISH CUP - 5TH RND
CALEDONIAN THISTLE 0
RANGERS 3 (Thomson og 15, Gascoigne 35, 52) Att: 12,000
CELTIC 2 (Van Hooijdonk 88, Thom 89)
DUNDEE UTD 1 (Coyle 29) Att: 32,750
ABERDEEN 2 (Windass 31, Bernard 88)
AIRDRIE 1 (Bonar 18) Att: 11,800

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 17
WEEKEND
FALKIRK 1 (Weir 88)
PARTICK THISTLE 2 (Lyons 24, 63) Att: 3,479
HEARTS 1 (Mackay 84)
HIBERNIAN 1 (Dow 51) Att: 14,293
KILMARNOCK 0
MOTHERWELL 1 (Lambert pen 19) Att: 7,035
RAITH ROVERS 2 (Kirk 10, Cameron 39)
ABERDEEN 2 (Miller 24, Buchan 84) Att: 4,932
RANGERS 1 (McLaren 41)
CELTIC 1 (Hughes 87) Att: 47,312

SCOTLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	30	22	6	2	67	19	72
Celtic	30	19	10	1	54	20	67
Aberdeen	30	14	5	11	45	33	47
Hearts	30	12	5	13	45	50	41
Hibernian	30	10	7	13	38	49	37
Raith Rovers	30	10	6	14	31	43	36
Kilmarnock	30	9	6	15	34	47	33
Motherwell	30	7	11	12	20	31	32
Partick Thistle	30	8	5	17	25	47	29
Falkirk	30	6	5	19	27	47	23

SPAIN

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25
MIDWEEK
SPANISH CUP - SEMI-FINALS, 1ST LEG
BARCELONA 1 (Popescu pen 51)
ESPANYOL 0 Att: 75,000
VALENCIA 3 (Galvez 6, Fernando 43, Mijatovic 89)
ATLETICO MADRID 5 (Pantic 47, 65, Biagini 73, Juan Carlos 80, Roberto 87) Att: 43,000
WEEKEND
RACING SANTANDER 2 (Popov 33, Merino 82)
LA CORUNA 1 (Beguiristain pen 53) Att: 14,000
ALBACETE 2 (Pedro Riesco 45, Zalazar pen 59)
MERIDA 0 Att: 12,000
ATLETICO MADRID 3 (Juan Carlos 15, Simeone 21, Caminero 72)
CELTA VIGO 2 (Gudelj 8, 44) Att: 50,000
BARCELONA 1 (Kodro 84)
REAL BETIS 0 Att: 80,000
COMPOSTELA 3 (Fabiano 45, Christensen 61, Virgilio 90)
REAL MADRID 3 (Zamorano 16, Raul 48, Hierro 55) Att: 15,000
REAL SOCIEDAD 1 (Loren 80)
REAL VALLADOLID 0 Att: 18,000
SALAMANCA 1 (Claudio 77)
RAYO VALLECANO 2 (Guilherme 20, Onesimo 68) Att: 11,000
SEVILLA 1 (Petkovic 44)
ATHLETIC BILBAO 1 (Bolo 75) Att: 34,200
SPORTING GIJON 2 (Eloy 12, Julio Salinas 68)
ESPANYOL 3 (Bogdanovic 2, Javi Garcia 81, Alex Fernandez pen 90) Att: 20,200
TENERIFE 1 (Juanele 40)
REAL ZARAGOZA 2 (Poyet 10, Caceres 67) Att: 13,000
VALENCIA 3 (Poyatos 18, Mijatovic 52, Arroyo 89)
REAL OVIEDO 1 (Cesar 32) Att: 45,000

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 3
MIDWEEK
SPANISH CUP - SEMI-FINALS, 2ND LEG
ESPANYOL 2 (Javi 38, Uraiz 63 pen)
BARCELONA 3 (Kodro 41, Amor 80, Popescu 90)
Barcelona won 4-2 on agg
ATLETICO MADRID 1 (Pantic 45 pen)
VALENCIA 2 (Viola 21, Fernando 55)
Atletico Madrid won 6-4 on agg
WEEKEND
LA CORUNA 2 (David 48, Radchenko 84)
ATLETICO MADRID 2 (Penev 40, Pantic 59 pen) Att: 25,000
ATHLETIC BILBAO 0
BARCELONA 0 Att: 25,000
REAL OVIEDO 3 (Christiansen 4, 68, Carlos 90)
COMPOSTELA 1 (Ohen 14) Att: 15,429
REAL BETIS 3 (Sabas 58, 66, 71)
VALENCIA 0 Att: 40,000
ESPANYOL 0
SEVILLA 1 (Pepelu 48) Att: 20,000
REAL MADRID 5 (Raul 26, Zamorano 41, 79, Laudrup 74, Luis Enrique 89)
SALAMANCA 0 Att: 70,000
RAYO VALLECANO 2 (Guilherme 51, 88)
TENERIFE 4 (Jokanovic 19, Pizzi 63 pen, 83, Pinilla 68) Att: 10,000
MERIDA 1 (Prieto 78)
REAL SOCIEDAD 2 (Karpin 28, 55) Att: 13,000
REAL ZARAGOZA 3 (Morientes 13, 91, Higuera 92)
ALBACETE 1 (Luna 6) Att: 18,000
CELTA VIGO 0
SPORTING GIJON 0 Att: 18,000
REAL VALLADOLID 3 (Peternac 7 pen, 52, 78)
RACING SANTANDER 1 (Popov 75) Att: 17,000

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 10
WEEKEND
VALENCIA 4 (Fernardo 40, Viola 43, Mijatovic 48,85)
BARCELONA 1 (Amor 68) Att: 49,000
ALBACETE 1 (Bjelica pen 13)
RAYO VALLECANO 2 (Aquino 42, Cortijo 60) Att: 13,000
ATLETICO MADRID 0
REAL VALLADOLID 2 (Peternac 79, 90) Att: 55,000
COMPOSTELA 1 (Bellido 56)
REAL BETIS 2 (Alfonso 75, 83) Att: 8,000
ESPANYOL 3 (Pochettino 35, Francisco 47, Benitez 72)
ATHLETIC BILBAO 0 Att: 20,000
RACING SANTANDER 2 (Faizulin 78, Villabona 87)
MERIDA 0 Att: 13,000
REAL SOCIEDAD 3 (Karpin 6, Luis Perez 53, Gracia 80)
REAL ZARAGOZA 2 (Nayim 10) Att: 23,000
SALAMANCA 0
REAL OVIEDO 1 (Carlos 88) Att: 18,000
SEVILLA 0
CELTA VIGO 0 Att: 60,300
SPORTING GIJON 1 (Eloy 32)
LA CORUNA 1 (Lopez Rekarte 51) Att: 22,900
TENERIFE 3 (Robaina 45, Pizzi 55, 87)
REAL MADRID 0 Att: 18,000

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 17
WEEKEND
BARCELONA 1 (Roger 8)
COMPOSTELA 0 Att: 60,000
REAL MADRID 2 (Luis Enrique 29, Raul 90)
ALBACETE 0 Att: 50,000
ATHLETIC BILBAO 0
VALENCIA 1 (Viola 86) Att: 35,000
CELTA VIGO 4 (Gudelj pen 7, 37, Ratkovic 10, Merino 20)
ESPANYOL 2 (Lardin 48, 59) Att: 17,000
LA CORUNA 3 (Fran 30, Paco 37, Bebeto 55)
SEVILLA 2 (Suker 41, Monchu 86) Att: 27,000
MERIDA 0
ATLETICO MADRID 1 (Kiko 59) Att: 14,000
RAYO VALLECANO 2 (Ezequiel Castillo 19, Aquino 57)
REAL SOCIEDAD 0 Att: 10,000
REAL BETIS 4 (Alfonso 22, 66, Pier 82, Sabas 87)
SALAMANCA 0 Att: 40,000
REAL OVIEDO 1 (Oli 71)
TENERIFE 3 (Juanele 45, Pizzi 61, Pinilla pen 75) Att: 15,930
REAL VALLADOLID 1 (Marcos 63)
SPORTING GIJON 0 Att: 18,000

SPAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Atletico Madrid	32	21	6	5	56	21	69
Barcelona	32	18	9	5	56	27	63
Valencia	32	19	4	9	61	39	61
Real Betis	32	15	11	6	49	33	56
Espanyol	32	15	10	7	44	28	55
Compostela	32	16	5	11	42	43	53
Real Madrid	32	14	9	9	60	44	51
Tenerife	32	14	9	9	53	47	51
Real Sociedad	32	13	9	10	42	41	48
La Coruna	32	12	10	10	51	30	46
Celta Vigo	32	10	11	11	36	38	41
Real Oviedo	32	10	8	14	35	46	38
Real Zaragoza	32	9	10	13	38	46	37
Racing Santander	32	9	10	13	36	50	37
Rayo Vallecano	32	10	7	15	37	53	37
Sevilla	32	8	11	13	31	44	35
Athletic Bilbao	32	8	10	14	31	46	34
Sporting Gijon	32	9	6	17	39	45	33
Real Valladolid	32	8	9	15	40	50	33
Albacete	32	7	9	16	41	60	30
Merida	32	5	12	15	25	46	27
Salamanca	32	5	9	18	39	63	24

SWITZERLAND

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 10
MIDWEEK
SWISS CUP - 4TH RND
AARAU 1 LUGANO 0
ASCONA 1 ST GALLEN 4
BULLE 0 FC SION 3
CONCORDIA 0 LUCERNE 2
RENNENS 0 SERVETTE 1
TUGGEN 0 FC ZURICH 2
GOSSAU 0 BASEL 2
LAUSANNE 2 NEUCHATEL XAMAX 5
MEYRIN 1 YOUNG BOYS 2 *Aet*
BADEN 1 GRASSHOPPER 1
Grasshopper won on pens

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MARCH 17
WEEKEND
AARAU 2 (Heldmann 30, 87)
LUCERNE 2 (Aleksandrov 5, 42) Att: 7,300
NEUCHATEL 3 (Kunz 35, Isabella 42, 70)
ST GALLEN 0 Att: 8,200
SEVETTE 2 (Sesa 45, Ippoliti 70)
GRASSHOPPER 2 (Turkyilmaz 13, Vega 23) Att: 4,700
SION 2 (Vidmar pen 40, Colombo 90)
BASEL 0 Att: 12,800

SWITZERLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Neuchatel	4	3	1	0	6	1	31
Grasshopper	4	1	3	0	5	2	28
Sion	3	2	0	1	3	3	27
Lucerne	4	1	1	2	4	5	24
Aarau	4	2	2	0	9	3	22
Servette	4	0	3	1	4	5	17
Basle	4	0	1	3	3	8	16
St Gallen	3	0	1	2	0	7	15

Note: Aggregate points include bonus points from the qualifying phase.

INTERNATIONAL RESULTS

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22
Feb 22 - Hong Kong - Carlsberg Cup Final
SWEDEN 1 (Pringle 52)
JAPAN 1 (Omura 65)
HT: 0-0. **90min:** 1-1. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Mikkelsen (Den)
Aet, Sweden won 5-4 on pens
Sweden: Ravelli - R Nilsson, C Karlsson, M Nilson, Lucic - Mild, Alexandersson, Erlingmark, M Svensson - Jonsson (Henriksson 79), Dahlin (Pringle 46; Landberg 103).
Japan: K Mackawa - Sohma, Ihara, Omura, Yanagimoto - Yamaguchi, Honda, Kitazawa (Morishima 57; Okano 113), Nanami - Takagi, K Miura.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23
Feb 23 - Kuwait - intl friendly
KUWAIT 0
ECUADOR 3 (Tenorio 5, Hurtado 70, Batallas 80)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 1,000.
Kuwait: Fadli - Houssin, Doukhi, Bonayane, Hagi - Chimari, Marzouk, Wabrane, Souhi - Mubarak, Dawood.
Ecuador: Cevallos - Rivera, Tenrio, Montano, Pazmino - Garay, Carabali, Gonzalez, Batallas - A Fernandez, E Hurtado.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24
Feb 24 - Pyla - intl friendly
ESTONIA 2 (Kristal 13, Rajala 45)
FAROE ISLANDS 2 (Johannesen 30, H Jarnskor 45)
HT: 2-2. **Att:** 2,000. **Ref:** Kipriandis (Cyp)
Estonia: Poom - Lemsalu, Kirs, Hohlov-Simson, Olumets - Lindmaa, Zelinski, T Kallaste, Kristal - Rajala (Linnumae 75), Krom.
Faroes: Knudsen - Johanessen, J K Hanen (J Rasmussen 66), Dam, K Morkore - A Morkore, M Jarnskot (Johnsson 72), H Jarnskor, Muller - O HÃnsen, J E Rasmussen (Arge 72).

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25
Feb 25 - Brisbane - intl friendly
AUSTRALIA 0
SWEDEN 2 (Andreas Andersson 86, 87)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 6,500.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28
Feb 28 - Sydney - intl friendly
AUSTRALIA 0
SWEDEN 0
Att: 13,905.
Feb 28 - Rijeka - intl friendly
CROATIA 2 (Brajkovic 23, Vlaovic 89)
POLAND 1 (Baluszewski 18)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Milan Mitrovic (Sloven)
Croatia: Ladic (Gabric 46) - Brajkovic, Jerkan (Pavlicic 46), Soldo, Stefulj, Asanovic (Rukavina 81), Prosinecki, Boban, Jarni (Pralija 55), Jurcevic (Vlaovic 46), Stanic (Cvitanovic 61).
Poland: Woznia - Jaskulski, Waldoch (Lapinski 79), Wegrzyn, Gesior, Wyciszkiewicz, Czerwiec, Wojtala, Baluszynski (Srutwa 64), Nowak, Citko.

SATURDAY, MARCH 2
Mar 2 - Kuala Lumpur - Asian Cup qual
MALAYSIA 1
INDONESIA 1

MONDAY, MARCH 4
Mar 4 - Kuala Lumpur - Asian Cup qual
INDONESIA 7
INDIA 1

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6
Mar 6 - Miami - intl friendly
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO 2 (John 9, Eve 43)
HAITI 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 15,123.
Mar 6 - Miami - intl friendly
COLOMBIA 2 (Valenciano 34, 81)
HONDURAS 1 (Nunez 13)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 15,123.
Mar 6 - Kuala Lumpur - Asian Cup qual
MALAYSIA 5 (Zainal Abidin 12, 57, Dollah Saleh 21, 54, Annuar Abou Bakar 71)
INDIA 2 (Chalton Chapman 46, Baichung Bhuthia 78)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 12,000.
Mar 6 - Riyadh - Asian Cup qual
SAUDI ARABIA 1 (Al Thounayane)
YEMEN 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 12,000.

THURSDAY, MARCH 7
Mar 8 - Santa Cruz - intl friendly
BOLIVIA 2 (Coimbra 45, 52)
PERU 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 8,000.
Bolivia: Barrero - Rimba, Paraba, Cossio, Herrera - O Sanchez, Ramos, Tufino, Castillo - Paniagua, Coimbra.
Peru: Pizarro - Solano, Jose Soto, Dulanto, Hidalgo - Palacios, Del Solar, Carranza, Jayo - Guadalupe, Ramirez.

SUNDAY, MARCH 10
Mar 10 - Roseau - World Cup CONCACAF Caribbean 1st rnd, 1st leg
DOMINICA 3 (Dominic 8, Dangler 42 pen, Marshall 90)
ANTIGUA 3 (Clarke 15, Edwards 28, 74)
HT: 2-2. **Att:** 5,000
May 10 - Ashkabad - Asian Cup qual
TURKMENISTAN 2
KUWAIT 2
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 6,000.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13
Mar 13 - Zagreb - intl friendly
CROATIA 3 (Vlaovic 24, 43, 63)
SOUTH KOREA 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 4,000. **Ref:** Lazarevksi (Mac)
Croatia: Ladic (Gabric 87) - Soldo, Jarni, Stimac (Simic 72), Jerkan (Pralija 64) - Bilic, Jurcevic (Mornar 76), Stanic (Cvitanovic 79), Asanovic - Suker, Vlaovic (Papaic 83).
S Korea: Kim J - Choi (Kim B 46), Huh, Shin, Kim D (Park J 46); Seo 78) - Ko, Cho, Hwang (Park N 68), Kim T (Roh 68) - Hong, Lee (Sin 33).
Mar 13 - Luxembourg, Stade Josy Barthel - intl friendly
LUXEMBOURG 1 (Cardoni 7)
SWITZERLAND 1 (Vega 75)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 2,000. **Ref:** Ancion (Bel)
Luxembourg: Koch - Vanek, Weis, Lamborelle, Strasser - Saibene, Birsens, Groff, Ganser (Theis 41) - Cardoni, Langers (Fanelli 88).
Switzerland: Pascolo - Hottiger, Henchoz, Herr (Vega 60), Quentin, Colombo (Grassi 46), Ohrel (Koller 70), Sforza, A Sutter (Fournier 60), Knup, Chapuisat (Comisetti 60).

TUESDAY, MARCH 26
Mar 26 - Varazdin - friendly intl
CROATIA 2 (Stimac 74, Vlaovic 76)
ISRAEL 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 8,000.
Croatia: Gabric (Pavlovic 46) - Brajkovic (Pavlicic 46), Rapaic (Cvitanovic 46), Stimac (Simic 77), Soldo, Bilic, Jurcevic (Mornar 75), Prosinecki (Prajila 63), Vlaovic, Asanovic, Spehar (Balajic 46).
Israel: Malul - Halfon, Glam (Glamoff 50), Hazan, Brumer, Klinger, Benin, Shelach, Berkovitz (Attar 60), Kavivo, Benado.
Mar 26 - Ostrava - friendly intl
CZECH REPUBLIC 3 (Suchoparek 14, Kuka 59 pen, 90)
TURKEY 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 4,000.

EUROPEAN UNDER-21 CHAMPIONSHIP

(Olympic qualifying event)

QUARTER-FINALS, 1ST LEG
Mar 12 (Budapest): HUNGARY 2 (Szanyo 14 pen, Zavadszky 79) SCOTLAND 1 (Glass 34).
Mar 13 (Osnabruck): GERMANY 0 FRANCE 0.
Mar 13 (Granada): SPAIN 2 (Dani Garcia 28, Roberto Fresnedoso 41), CZECH REPUBLIC 1 (Vladimir Smicer 50).
Mar 13 (Lisbon): PORTUGAL 1 (Hugo Porfirio 18), ITALY 0.

QUARTER-FINALS, 2ND LEG
Mar 26 (Metz): FRANCE 4 (Robert Pires 29, 33, Florian Maurice 42, 71), GERMANY 1 (Christian Nerlinger 77)
France won 4-1 on agg
Mar 26 (Easter Road, Edinburgh): SCOTLAND 3 (Dailly 42, Donnelly 86, Hamilton 84), HUNGARY 1 (Egressy 30)
Scotland won 4-3 on agg

OTHER MATCHES

Mar 6 (Fullerton, Calif): UNITED STATES OLYMPIC XI 2 MEXICO U23 3.
Mar 6 (Gifu): JAPAN OLYMPIC XI 0 ECUADOR 1 (E Hurtado 89).
Mar 26 (Coleraine): N IRELAND B (Patterson 21, Quinn 60, Mulryne 87), NORWAY B 0.
Mar 26 (Drogheda): REP IRELAND U21 0 RUSSIA U21 1 (Semak 2).

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

QUARTER-FINALS, 1ST LEG
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6
BORUSSIA DORTMUND 0
AJAX 2 (Davids 8, Kluivert 83)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 35,000. **Ref:** Gallagher (Eng).
Dortmund: Klos - Sammer*, Reuter, Kohler, Julio Cesar, Schmidt (Herrlich 46), Ricken (Zorc 77), Freund, Berger, Reinhardt, Riedle.
* = *Sammer sent off, 65min.*
Ajax: Van der Sar - Reiziger (Scholten 84), Blind, Silooy, Bogarde, Wooter (Musampa 46), Kanu, Davids, George, Kluivert, R de Boer.

LEGIA WARSAW 0
PANATHINAIKOS 0
Att: 12,000. **Ref:** Diaz Vega (Spa).
Legia: Szczesny - Mandziejewicz, Jozwiak, Bednarz, Zielinski, Lewandowski (Wieszczycki 77), L Pisz, Michalski, Podbrozny, Kucharski (Sokolowski 65), Staniek.
Panathinaikos: Wandzik - Apostolakis, Markos, G H Georgiadis, Kalitzakis, Kolitsidakis, Borrelli, G S Georgiadis, Warzycha, Maragos (Kapouranis 80), Alexoudis.

NANTES 2 (N'Doram 28, Ouedec 67)
MOSCOW SPARTAK 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 35,000. **Ref:** Krug (Ger).
Nantes: Casagrande - Le Dizet (Chanelet 70), Guyot, Decroix, Pignol, Cauet, Makelele, Pedros*, N'Doram (Ferri 64), Kosecki, Ouedec (Gourvennec 82).
* = *Pedros sent off, 77min.*
Spartak: Nigmatullin - Ananko, Lipko, Nikiforov, Yevseyev, Alenichev (Bezrodny 71), Kechinov, Mamedov (Chudin 34), Tsymbalar (Shmarov 46), Piatniski, Tikhonov.

REAL MADRID 1 (Raul 20)
JUVENTUS 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 77,000. **Ref:** Rothlisberger (Swi).
Madrid: Buyo - Chendo, Garcia Calvo, Alkorta, Redondo, Hierro, Raul, Soler (Quique Sanchez 27), Zamorano, M Laudrup (Michel 66), Luis Enrique.
Juventus: Peruzzi - Ferrara (Pessotto 77), Torricelli, Carrera, Vierchowod, Paulo Sousa (Jugovic 66), Lombardo (Padovano 46), Conte, Ravanelli, Del Piero, Deschamps.

QUARTER-FINALS, 2ND LEG
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20
AJAX 1 (Musampa 75)
BORUSSIA DORTMUND 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 42,000. **Ref:** Krondl (Cze).
Ajax won 3-0 on agg
Ajax: Van der Sar - Silooy, Scholten, F de Boer, Bogarde, R de Boer, Wooter, Davids, Kanu, Litmanen (Landzaat 87), Musampa.
Dortmund: Klos - Kohler, Kree, Freund, Julio Cesar, Tretschok (Reinhardt 62), Wolters (Moller 61), Zorc, Chapuisat (Sosa 79), Ricken, Riedle.

JUVENTUS 2 (Del Piero 17, Padovano 54)
REAL MADRID 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 65,000. **Ref:** Van der Ende (Hol).
Juventus won 2-1 on agg
Juventus: Peruzzi - Vierchowod, Torricelli*, Porrini, Pessotto, Conte, Deschamps, Jugovic (Di Livio 46), Vialli, Padovano (Lombardo 74), Del Piero (Marocchi 88).
* = *Torricelli sent off, 79min.*
Madrid: Canizares - Chendo, Alkorta*, Garcia Calvo, Lasa, Milla, Luis Enrique, Michel (Esnaider 65), Laudrup, Raul, Quique (Rincon 57).
* = *Alkorta sent off, 72min.*

PANATHINAIKOS 3 (Warzycha 34, 58, Borelli 72)
LEGIA WARSAW 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 75,000. **Ref:** Khusainov (Rus).
Panathinaikos won 3-0 on agg
Panathinaikos: Wandzik - Apostolakis, Ouzounidis, Georgiadis, Kalitzakis, Kolitsidakis, Borelli (Goumas 90), Kapouranis, Warzycha (Lagonikakis 90), Maragos (Nioplias 80), Donis.
Legia: Szczesny - Mandziejewicz, Sokolowski (Kacprzak 82), Jalocha*, Zielinski, Lewandowski, Pisz, Michalaski, Podbrozny

WORLD SERVICE

AJAX WIN EUROPEAN SUPERCUP . . . LIBERTADORES CUP RESULTS AND FIXTURES . . . CONCACAF CHAMPIONS CUP RESULTS AND TABLES . . . ASIAN TABLES . . .

PARIS SG 3 (Rai 8pen, 67pen, Loko 32)
PARMA 1 (Melli 25)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 43,686.
Paris SG won 3-2 on agg
Paris: Lama - Fournier (Mahe 75), Colleter (Guerin 67), N'Gotty, Roche, Le Guen, Bravo, Nouma (Llacer 68), Dely Valdes, Rai, Loko.
Parma: Bucci - Mussi (Di Chiara 83), Benarrivo, Sensini, Cannavaro, Apolloni, Melli, Stoichkov (Inzaghi 65), D Baggio, Brambilla, Pin (Crippa 77).

RAPID VIENNA 3 (Jancker 48, 74, Stoger 62 pen)
MOSCOW DYNAMO 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 46,000.
Rapid won 4-0 on agg
Rapid: Konsel - Hatz, Guggi, Ivanov, Schoettel, Stoeger, Jovanovic*, Marasek, Stumpf, Jancker, Heraf.
* = *Jovanovic sent off, 83min.*
Dynamo: Smetanin - Yakhimovitch, Kovtun, Schulgin (Safronov 59), Nekrasov, Kobelev, Samatov (Lemshko 65), Cherishev*, Grishin (Tishkov 55), Podpali, Terechin**.
* = *Cherishev sent off 29min.*
** = *Tereshin sent off, 83min.*

REAL ZARAGOZA 1 (Morientes 37)
LA CORUNA 1 (Bebeto 64)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 25,000.
La Coruna won 2-1 on agg
Zaragoza: Belman - Belsue, Jesus Garcia, Solana, Nayim (Pardeza 67), Cuartero, Dani Garcia (Oscar Celada 62), Aragon, Morientes, Higuera, Poyet.
La Coruna: Liano - Voro, Villaroya, Jemez, Djukic, Mauro Silva (Donato 4), Lopez Rekarte, Aldana, Manjarin (Santaelena 77), Fran, Bebeto.

UEFA CUP

QUARTER-FINALS, 1ST LEG

TUESDAY, MARCH 5

BARCELONA 2 (Bakero 20, Abelardo 70)
PSV EINDHOVEN 2 (Nilis 3, 49)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 96,000.
Barcelona: Busquets - Sergi, Abelardo, Guardiola, Popescu, Bakero (Ivan de la Pena 78), Figo, Amor, Kodro, Cuellar (Oscar Garcia 64), Roger Garcia (Juan Carlos Moreno 83).
PSV Eindhoven: Waterreus - Van der Weerden, Faber, Valckx, Numan, Wouters (Zenden 69), Vink, Jonk, Eijkelkamp, Nilis (E Gudjohnsen 90), Cocu.

BAYERN MUNICH 2 (Klinsmann 16, Scholl 45)
NOTTINGHAM FOREST 1 (Chettle 18)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 35,000. **Ref:** Lopez Nieto (Spa).
Bayern: Kahn - Matthaus, Kreuzer, Helmer, Strunz, Sforza, Scholl, Nerlinger, Ziege, Zickler, Klinsmann.
Nottm Forest: Crossley - Phillips, Haland, Chettle, Pearce, Stone, Gemmill, Bart-Williams, Woan, Campbell, Roy.

MILAN 2 (Eranio 29, Baggio 75)
BORDEAUX 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 25,670. **Ref:** Zhuk (Ukr)
Milan: Ielpo - Panucci, Maldini, Viera, Costacurta, Baresi, Eranio, Desailly, Baggio, Savicevic (Donadoni 88), Simone (Di Canio 73).
Bordeaux: Huard - Toyes, Lizararu, Croci, Dogon, Lucas (Dutuel 80), Zidane, Friis-Hansen, Bancarel, Richard Witschge, Dugarry (Tholot 88).

SLAVIA PRAGUE 2 (Poborsky 11, Vagner 51)
AS ROMA 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 14,377
Slavia: Stejskal - Lerch, Suchoparek, Bejbl, Kozel, Novotny, Smicer (Hunal 89), Penicka, Poborsky, Vagner (Vavra 74), Kristofik (Hysky 66).
Roma: Cervone - Annoni, Lanna, Statuto, Petruzzi*, Carboni, Cappioli (Totti 53), Di Bagio, Balbo, Thern, Fonseca.
* = *Petruzzi sent off, 81min.*

QUARTER-FINALS, 2ND LEG

TUESDAY, MARCH 19

BORDEAUX 3 (Tholot 14, Dugarry 63, 69)
MILAN 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 30,000.
Bordeaux won 3-2 on agg
Bordeaux: Huard - Toyes, Lizarazu, Friis-Hansen, Dogon, Lucas, Dutuel (Grenet 59), Zidane, Richard Witschge, Tholot (Fernandez 80), Dugarry.
Milan: Ielpo - Panucci, Maldini, Vieira (Locatelli 70), Costacurta, Baresi, Eranio (Albertini 24), Desailly, Weah, Baggio (Di Canio 46), Donadoni.

NOTTINGHAM FOREST 1 (Stone 84)
BAYERN MUNICH 5 (Ziege 30, Strunz 43, Klinsmann 65, 80, Papin 72)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 28,844. **Ref:** Ceccarini (Ita).
Bayern Munich won 7-2 on agg
Forest: Crossley - Lyttle (Haland 73), Pearce, Cooper, Chettle, Phillips, Stone, Bart-Williams (McGregor 64), Campbell (Lee 64), Woan, Roy.
Bayern: Kahn - Babbel, Ziege, Strunz (Frey 60), Helmer (Kreuzer 79), Herzog, Scholl, Sforza (Nerlinger 46), Klinsmann, Matthaus, Papin.

PSV EINDHOVEN 2 (Zenden 44, Eykelkamp 65)
BARCELONA 3 (Bakero 3, Figo 22, Sergi 79)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 26,000.
Barcelona won 5-4 on agg
PSV: Waterreus - Van der Weerden, Klomp, Cocu, Numan, Van der Doelen (E Gudjohnsen 46), Vink, Jonk (Maas 86), Eykelkamp, Nilis, Zenden.
Barcelona: Busquets - Ferrer, Abelardo, Guardiola, Popescu, Bakero (Roger Garcia 51), Figo (Albert Celades 72), Amor, Nadal*, Hagi (Cuellar 84), Sergi.
* = *Nadal sent off, 58min.*

AS ROMA 3 (Moriero 60, 99, Giannini 82)
SLAVIA PRAGUE 1 (Vavra 112)
HT: 0-0. **90min:** 2-0. **Att:** 63,859.
Agg: 3-3, Slavia won on away goals
Roma: Cervone - Annoni, Aldair, Lanna, Moriero, Totti, Giannini, Di Biagio (Statuto 65), Carboni, Balbo, Fonseca (Cappioli 46).
Slavia: Stejskal - Suchoparek, Kozel, Lerch, Penicka, Poborsky, Bejbl, Hysky, Novotny, Smicer (Vagner 86), Kristofik (Vavra 69).

EUROPEAN SUPERCUP

FEB 28 - AMSTERDAM - 2ND LEG

AJAX 4 (Bogarde 41, George 53, Blind 66 pen, 69 pen)
REAL ZARAGOZA 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 22,000 . **Ref:** Mottram (Sco)
Ajax won 5-1 on agg
Ajax: Van der Sar - Reiziger, Blind, F de Boer, Bogarde, Scholten (Van den Bergh 79), George (Gehring 70), Davids, Kanu, Kluivert (Demtchenko 70), Silooy.
Zaragoza: Cedrun* (Belman 64) - Belsue, Sanjuan**, Caceres, Oscar, Xavier Aguado, Gustavo Lopez, Aragon, Fernando Morientes (Cuartero 81), Francisco Higuera, Dani.
* = *Cedrun sent off, 64min.*
** = *Sanjuan sent off, 67min.*

LIBERTADORES CUP

FIRST ROUND

GROUP 1

MARCH 13 - GUAYAQUIL, ECUADOR

BARCELONA (Ecu) 3 (Gomez 52, Alfaro Moreno 52, Noriega 80)
ESPOLI (Ecu) 2 (Jauch 49, Oleas 61)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 35,000.
Barcelona: Morales, Gomez, Tanorio, Noriega, Alciver (Yanez), Carabali, Morales, Macenaki (Villareal), De Souza, Uquillas (Usuriaga), Alfaro Moreno.
Espoli: Hidalgo, Rivera, Ballesteros, Valencia, Rivera, Obregon, Diaz, Dominquez, Yepes, Obleas, Jauch (Zambrano).

MAR 13 - ASUNCION, PARGUAY

OLIMPIA (Par) 1 (Bourdier 29)
CERRO PORTENO (Par) 2 (Nunez 33, Villamayor 75)
HT: 101.

GROUP 2

MAR 13 - LIMA, PERU

SPORTING CRISTAL (Peru) 0
UNIVERSITARIO (Peru) 2 (Gonzalez 9, Ferrari 62)
HT: 0-1.
Universitario: Yupanqui, Torrealva, Espinoza, Barga, Carranza (Pereda), Munoz (Rogriquez), Ferrari, Dominquez, Gonzalez (*sent off 33*), Guadalupe, (Caranzas), Rossi.
Sp. Cristal: Balerio (*sent off 33*), Solano, Asteggiano, Soto, Uballuz, Garay, Struway (sent off 66), Hidalgo (Marraou), Palacios, Lazo (Pinillos), Julinho.

GROUP 3

MAR 13 - BARRANQUILLA, COLOMBIA

ATLETICO JUNIOR (Col) 1 (Pacheco 26)
AMERICA CALI (Col) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 30,000
At. Junior: Pazo, Marrero, Mendoza, Cassiani, Galeano, Pelaez, Alvarez, Pacheco, McKenzie (Araujo), Castro (Nieto), Valenciano.
America: Cordoba, Cardona (*sent off 40*), Bermudez, C. Asprilla, Maziri, Berti, Cabrera, Oviedo (Castillo), Hernandez (Escobar), Comas (Dinas), De Avila.

MAR 13 - ORURO, BOLIVIA

SAN JOSE (Bolivia) 2 (Espindola 11, 21)
GUABIRA (Bolivia) 1 (Jumarilla 64)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 10,000
San Jose: Ibarra, Herrera, Cossio, Cuenca, Ferrufino, Villegas, Paniagua, Daza, Espindola (Villegas) Cardozo, Urruti (Andrada).
Guabira: B. Rea, M. Cruz, R. Ros, Herrera, Roca, J.C. Paz, (R. Cruz), Castillo, Ceballos, Cespedes, Amarilla, Ramos.

GROUP 4

MAR 13 - SAO PAULO, BRAZIL

CORINTHIANS (Bra) 3 (Leonardo 28, Edmundo 45, Marcelinho 63)
BOTAFOGO (Bra) 0
HT: 2-0.
Corinthians: Ronaldo, Santos, Celio Silva, Henrique, Silvinho, Ze Elias, Bernardo, Souza, Marcelinho, Edmundo, Leonardo.
Botafogo: Vagner, Perivaldo, Gottardo, Paulo Roberto, Moises, Jemir, Videmar, Beto, Tulio, Betinho, Goncallves.

MAR 13 - SANTIAGO, CHILE

UNIV. DE CHILE 2 (Traverso 28, Salas 34)
UNIVERSIDAD CATOLICA (Chile) 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** C. Robles (Chile)
Univ. Chile: Pinto, C. Castaneda, Fuentes, Traverao, Ponce (More 54), Romero, Galdames, Valencia (V. Castanado 53), Rodriguez, Goldberg (Silvano 80), Salas.
Univ. Catolica: Tapia, Gomez, Ardiman, Lizama, Muller, Lope (Salinas 46), Parraquez, Vasquez (Rosental 46), Cate, Caballoa (Garnero 60), Gonzalez.

GROUP 5

MAR 13 - PUERTO ORDAZ, VENEZUALA

MINERVEN (Ven) 4 (Bidoglio 35, Tortolaro 54, Vera 57, Ferrara 79)
CARACAS FC (Ven) 2 (Gerson Diaz 60, Salizu 70)
HT: 1-0.

MAR 13 - BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

SAN LORENZO (Arg) 1 (Netto 66)
RACING CLUB (Arg) 1 (Francescoli 61)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** J. Castrilli (Arg)
San Lorenzo: Passet, M. Escudero (Ortega Sanchez 66), Arevalo, Ruggeri, Manusovich, Monserrat (Rivadero 51), Galatto, Netto, Silas (Quinteros 85), Araberello,Biaggio.
River Plate: Buros, H. Diaz, R. Ayala, Gomez, Rivarola, Almeyda, Astrada, Sorin (m. Escudero 78), Cedres, Ortega (Gallardo 80), Francescoli.

FIRST ROUND

(**Top 3 in each group advance, plus holders Gremio, who received a bye**)

GROUP 1

13.03.96	Barcelona v Espoli 3-2
13.03.96	Olimpia v Cerro Porteno 1-2
19.03.96	Espoli v Olimpia 1-0
22.03.96	Barcelona v Olimpia....2-1
26.03.96	Espoli v Cerro Porteno
29.03.96	Barcelona v Cerro Porteno
03.04.96	Espoli v Barcelona
03.04.96	Cerrp Porteno v Olimpia
09.04.96	Cerro Porteno v Espoli
12.04.96	Olimpia v Espoli
16.04.96	Cerro Porteno v Barcelona
19.04.96	Olimpia v Barcelona

GROUP 1 TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona (Ecu)	2	2	0	0	5	3	6
Cerro Porteno (Par)	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Espoli (Ecu)	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
Olimpia (Par)	3	0	0	3	1	4	0

GROUP 2

13.03.96	Sporting Cristal v Universitario ..0-2
18.03.96	Defensor v Penarol 2-4
23.03.96	Universitario v Penarol
26.03.96	Sporting Cristal v Penarol
30.03.96	Universitario v Defensor
02.04.96	Sporting Cristal v Defensor
07.04.96	Universitario v Sporting Cristal
07.04.96	Penarol v Defensor
12.04.96	Defensor v Universitario
13.04.96	Penarol v Sporting Cristal
16.04.96	Penarol v Universitario
17.04.96	Defensor v Sporting Cristal

GROUP 2 TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Penarol	1	1	0	0	4	2	3
Universitario (Peru)	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Defensor (Uru)	1	0	0	1	2	4	0
Sp. Cristal (Peru)	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

GROUP 3

13.03.96	Atletico Junior v America Cali 1-0
13.03.96	San Jose v Guabira....2-1
19.03.96	Guabira v America Cali 0-2
22.03.96	San Jose v America Cali 1-0
26.03.96	Atletico Junior v Guabira
29.03.96	America Cali v Guabira
03.04.96	America Cali v Atletico Junior
03.04.96	Guabira v San Jose
09.04.96	San Jose v Atletico Junior
12.04.96	Guabira v Atletico Junior
16.04.96	Atletico Junior v San Jose
19.04.96	America Cali v San Jose

GROUP 3 TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
San Jose (Bol)	2	2	0	0	3	1	6
Atletico Junior (Col)	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
America Cali (Col)	3	1	0	2	2	2	3
Guabira (Bol)	2	0	0	2	1	4	0

GROUP 4

13.03.96	Corinthians v Botafogo 3-0
13.03.96	Univ. de Chile v Univ. Catolica ..2-0
19.03.96	Univ. Catolica v Corinthians....2-3
22.03.96	Univ de Chile v Corinthians....1-0
26.03.96	Botafogo v Univ. Catolica
29.03.96	Corinthians v Univ. Catolica
03.04.96	Botafogo v Corinthians
03.04.96	Univ. Catolica v Univ. de Chile
09.04.96	Univ. Catolica v Botafogo
12.04.96	Univ. de Chile v Botafogo
16.04.96	Corinthians v Univ. de Chile
19.04.96	Botafogo v Univ. de Chile

GROUP 4 TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Corinthians (Bra)	3	2	0	1	6	3	6
Univ. de Chile	2	2	0	0	3	0	6
Univ. Catolica (Chi)	2	0	0	2	2	5	0
Botafogo (Bra)	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

GROUP 5

13.03.96	San Lorenzo v River Plate....1-1
13.03.96	Minerven v Caracas FC 4-2
18.03.96	Minerven v San Lorenzo 2-2
22.03.96	Caracas FC v San Lorenzo 1-1
25.03.96	Minerven v River Plate
29.03.96	Caracas FC v River Plate
03.04.96	Caracas FC v Minerven
03.04.96	River Plate v San Lorenzo
09.04.96	San Lorenzo v Minerven
12.04.96	River Plate v Minerven
16.04.96	San Lorenzo v Carasac FC
19.04.96	River Plate v Caracas FC

GROUP 4 TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Minerven (Ven)	2	1	1	0	6	4	4
San Lorenzo (Arg)	3	0	3	0	4	4	3
River Plate (Arg)	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Caracas FC (Ven)	2	0	1	1	3	5	1

CONCACAF CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP

FIRST ROUND - 1ST LEG

MAR 10 - SAN JOSE, COTA RICA

ALAJUELENSE (CR) 4 (Gomez 2, Montero, Marin)
FAS (El S) 2 (Rodriguez, Meza)
Att: 2,000
Alajuelense: Rojas, Monero, Delgado, Marin, Wallace, Badilla, Guillan (Gonzalez), Lopez, Smith (Arnaez), Mullins (Violaz), Gomez.
FAS: Melendez, Osorio, Roncecei, Meza, Cubias, Sanchez, Burgos (Murillo), Rodriguez, Rivera, Aguirre, Ulloa (*Rodas - sent off 81*).

MAR 12 - PANAMA

COSMOS (Pan) 0
COMUNICACIONES (Guat) 4

MAR 16 - PANAMA

ARABE UNIDO (Pan) 1 (Clark 58)
REAL ESTELI (Nic) 1 (Oliva pen 35)
HT: 0-1

FIRST ROUND - 2ND LEG

MAR 14 - GUATEMALA

COMUNICACIONES (Guat) 2 (Miranda pen 13, Garcia 25)
COSMOS (Pan) 0
HT: 2-0
Comunicaciones win 6-0 on agg

ARGENTINA

National League
WEEK ENDING MARCH 11

BOCA JUNIORS 4 (Maradona pen 3, Peralta 5, Martinez 64, Vivas 78)
GIMNASIA Y ESGRIMA DE JUJUY 0

GIMNASIA Y ESGRIMA DE LA PLATA 0
DEPORTIVO ESPANOL 0

COLON DE SANTA FE 2 (H. Rodriguez 41, Risso 70)
ESTUDIANTES DE LA PLATA 1 (Palermo 37)

ARGENTINOS JUNIORS 1 (Cardinal pen 87)
RACING CLUB 3 (Capria pen 28, Carrario 42, C. Lopez 90)

SAN LORENZO 3 (Quinteros 25, Carranza 44, Rivadero 90)
RIVER PLATE 1 (Cadres 34)

BELGRANO CORDOBA 1 (Artime 19)
ROSARIO CENTRAL 1 (Da Silva 31)

VELEZ SARSFIELD 3 (Flores 21, Herrera 29, Trotta pen 80)
BANIELD 2 (Alegre pen 55, Cruz 71)

INDEPENDIENTE 0
FC OESTE 2 (Lorenzo 85, Torres 87)

NEWELL'S OLD BOYS 1 (Gabrich 73)
HURACAN 1 (Pineda 56)

LANUS 1 (A. Lopez 2)
PLATENSE 0

WEEK ENDING MARCH 18

GIMNASIA DE JUJUY 2 (Lobo 3, 40)
GIMNASIA LA PLATA 1 (Guglielminpietro 80)

DEPORTIVO ESPANOL 1 (Calvan 37)
COLON SANTA FE 0

ESTUDIANTES 2 (Craviotto 14, Maciel 52)
ARGENTINOS JUNIORS 0

RACING CLUB 1 (Carrario 49)
SAN LORENZO 0

RIVER PLATE 3 (Francescoli 23, 27 pen, 62)
BELGRANO CORDOBA 0

HURACAN 1 (Cuerra 90)
BOCA JUNIORS 1 (Veron 70)

PLATENSE 3 (Coria 52, Mena 74,?)
NEWELL'S OLD BOYS 2 (Gabrich 32, 79)

BANFIELD 0
INDEPENDIENTE 1 (Mazzoni 53)

ROSARIO CENTRAL 0
VELEZ SARSFIELD 0

FC OESTE 1 (Vargas 69)
LANUS 1 (Cravero 28)

BRAZIL

Rio de Janeiro (Guanabara State)
Opening Championship (Carioca Cup)

Final standings: 1) Botafogo 19 pts; 2) Flamengo 13; 3) Madureira, Vasco da Gama 11; 5) Fluminense 8; 6) Bangu 7; 7) America 4; 8) Olaria 2.

Sao Paulo – First Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Palmeiras	11	10	1	0	41	7	31
Portuguesa	12	10	1	1	27	10	31
Mogi Mirim	12	8	1	3	16	11	25
Corinthains	12	7	3	2	32	13	24
Sao Paulo	12	6	3	3	21	17	21
Uniao Sao Joao	12	5	4	3	22	14	19
Santos	12	5	2	5	19	18	17
America	12	4	3	5	19	23	15
Rio Branco	11	4	2	5	15	16	14
Juventus	12	4	1	7	8	16	13
Novorizontino	12	3	4	5	12	20	13
Aracatuba	12	3	3	6	12	22	12
XV de Jeu	12	2	3	7	13	26	9
Guarani	12	2	3	7		22	9
Botafogo	12	1	3	8	14	31	6
Ferroviaria	12	1	3	8	9	23	6

Top two in first and second round qualify for semi-finals. If same team wins both rounds they are champions.

COLOMBIA

First Division – Closing championship

1) Dep.Cali 28pts 2) Independiente Medellin 25; 3) Nacional, America 23; 5) Tolima, Caldas 18; 7) Millonarios, At. Junior. Envigado 16; 10) Union Magdalena, Independiente Santa Fe, Pereira 15; 13) Huila 14; 14) Quindio 13; 15) Cortulua 11; 16) Bucaramanga 10.
Overall standings: 1) Deportivo Cali 65 pts; 2) Nacional 55; 3) America 53; 4) Tolima 47; 5) Millonarios 43; 6) Union Magdalena 42; 7) Caldas, At. Junior 41; 9) Huila, Envigado, Indep. Santa Fe 38; 12) Independiente Medellin 36; 13) Quindio 34; 14) Pereira, Bucaramanga 33; 16) Cortulua 26.
(Top 8 qualify for final round)

CHILE

Pre-season First Division tournament
First round – final standings

Group 1: Antofagasta 14 pts; 2) Cobreloa 13; 3) Atacama 6; 4) Coquimba Unido 3.
Group 2: 1) Colo Cola 21; 2) Palestino 10; 3) Wanderers 7; 4) Union Espanola 1.
Group 3: 1) Universidad Catolica 19; 2) Huachipato 10; 3) Concepcion 6; 4) O'Higgins 5.
Group 4: 1) Universidad de Chile 18; 2) Temuco 13; 3) Osorno 6; 4) Auxax Italieano 4.

BOLIVIA

National Championship – 1st stage

Group A: 1) The Strongest 7pts, 2) Guabira 5; 3) Municipal, Jorge Wilsterman, Independiente Petrolero, Real Santa Cruz 2.
Group B: 1) Oriente Petrolero, San Jose 7; 3) Chaco Petrolero 6; 4) Bolivar 5; 5) Destroyers 1; 6) Stormers 0.

VENEZUELA

First Division - Final group leaders

Group A:1) Mineros 20 pts; 2) Trujillanos 19; 3) Caracas FC 14.
Group B: 1) Minerven, Deportivo Italia 15; 3) Tachira 14.
(Top 3 of each group in final round)

MEXICO

First Division

Group 1	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Univ.Nuevo Leon	30	11	12	7	35	35	45
Veracruz	30	13	5	12	41	42	44
Guadalajara	30	10	9	11	32	33	39
Toluca	30	9	7	14	28	40	34
Santos	30	8	9	13	38	39	33
Group 2							
America	30	10	14	6	52	38	44
Celaya	30	11	10	9	38	38	43
At. Morelia	30	7	8	15	33	50	29
Atante	30	6	10	14	33	48	26
Puebla	30	6	8	16	28	47	26
Group 3							
Cruz Azul	30	13	12	5	56	32	51
UNAM	30	11	11	8	43	35	44
Monterrey	30	10	11	9	44	42	41
Leon	30	10	11	9	45	44	41
Group 4							
Necaxa	30	14	10	6	51	34	52
Atlas	30	13	9	8	45	39	48
Nexa	30	12	10	8	47	42	46
UA.Guadalajara	30	4	18	8	35	46	30

Top two of each group qualify for play-offs plus two other clubs with highest number of points.

INTER-AMERICAN CUP

(between Libertadores Cup & CONCACAF club championship winners of 1994)

FEB 24 - BUENOS AIRES (ARG) - 2ND LEG

VELEZ SARSFIELD (Arg) 2 (Flores 2, 74)
CARTAGINES (CR) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** E. Dluzoiewski (Uru)
Velez won 2-0 on agg
Velez Sarsfield: Chilavert, Mendez, Sandona, Compagnucci, Cardozo, Herrera, Gomez, Camps, Posse (Moriggi 74), Pandolfi (Cordone 78 - *sent off 81*), Flores (Husain 77).
Cartagines: Barrantes, Hidalgo, Wood (*sent off 81*), Madrigal, Contreras, Peynado, Dos Santos, A. Gomez, Sanchez (Quiroz 76), Da Costa (N. Gomez 62), Bennett.

MAJOR CLUB INTERNATIONALS

Feb 21: Nacional (Uru) 2 Ilhwa Chunma (SK) 1; Herediano (CR) 0 Spartak Slovakia 1.

Feb 22: Barcelona (Ecu) 0 Gremio (Bra) 1.

Feb. 23: Alajuelense (CR) 2 Spartak Slovakia 1.

Feb 24: Penarol (Uru) 2 Ilwha Chunma (SK) 1.

Feb 25: Guatemala Select 2 Spartak Slovakia 1; Alianza Lima (Peru) 1 Emelec (Ecu) 0.

Feb 27: Lanus (Arg) 2 Cartagines (CR) 3.

Mar 2: Racing Club (Arg) 5 Defensor Sporting (Uru) 1; Barcelona (Ecu) 6 Newell's Old Boys (Arg) 0.

CONCACAF

BERMUDA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Vasco da Gama	12	10	1	1	37	12	31
North Village Reds	12	7	5	0	23	8	26
Dandy T, Hornets	12	5	3	4	27	17	18
Pembroke Hamilton	12	5	2	5	19	18	17
St George's Colts	12	5	2	5	18	18	17
Southampton Ran	12	5	1	6	13	16	16
Somerset Trojans	12	4	3	5	13	17	15
Boulevard Blazers	12	1	8	3	14	14	11
Devonshire Colts	12	2	5	5	11	12	11
Somerset Eagles	12	1	0	11	8	51	3

HONDURAS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Motagua	21	10	7	4	31	20	37
Olimpia	21	8	11	2	38	20	35
Victoria	21	8	9	4	28	23	33
Platense	21	9	6	6	24	21	33
Marathon	21	8	8	5	30	25	32
Vida	21	4	11	6	22	28	23
Real Espana	21	4	8	9	20	32	20
Real Maya	21	3	11	7	19	24	20
Independiente	21	2	13	6	16	23	19
Broncos	21	2	10	9	16	28	16

COSTA RICA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Alajuela	31	16	11	4	53	24	59
Herediano	31	17	4	10	43	30	55
Saprissa	31	15	9	7	44	22	54
Caragines	30	14	9	7	36	27	51
Belen	29	12	10	7	38	24	46
Puntarenas	31	13	6	12	36	36	45
Carmelita	31	10	9	12	35	39	39
Ramonense	31	11	5	15	39	48	38
San Carlos	31	11	4	16	29	50	37
Perez Zeledon	31	9	9	13	26	32	36
Turrialba	30	7	5	18	24	45	26
Guanacaste	31	6	5	20	29	55	23

GUATEMALA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sacachispas	3	2	0	1	5	2	6
Municipal	3	1	2	0	6	0	5
Amatitlan	3	1	2	0	3	2	5
Xelaju	3	1	1	1	3	8	4
Aurora	3	0	3	0	1	1	3
Comunicaciones	3	0	2	1	1	2	2
Escuintla	3	0	2	1	0	2	2
Suchitepequez	3	0	2	1	1	3	2
Relegation Group							
Izabal JC	3	2	0	1	6	5	6
Coban Imperial	3	1	2	0	3	2	5
Tally-Juca	3	1	1	1	4	3	4
Mictlan	3	0	1	2	4	7	1

EL SALVADOR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FAS	24	15	3	6	49	24	48
Aquila	24	12	7	5	40	21	43
Luis Angel Firpo	24	12	7	5	41	23	43
Atletico Marte	24	9	8	7	34	34	35
Municipal Limeno	24	7	10	7	21	24	31
Alianza	24	7	8	9	26	27	29
ADET	24	7	7	10	33	37	28
Dragon	24	8	4	12	32	42	28
El Roble	24	4	9	11	26	47	21
Tiburones	24	4	7	12	18	43	19

1996 CONCACAF CHAMPIONS CUP

NORTH & CENTRAL ZONE

GROUP 1

First Round

Series A

10.03.96	Comunicaciones (Guat) v Cosmos (Pan)....4-0
13.03.96	Cominicaciones v Cosmos 2-0
	Comunicaciones won 6-0 on agg

Series B

31.03.96	Sacachispas (Guat) v Juventus (Nic)
14.04.96	Juventus v Sacachispas

Series C

17.03.96	Saprissa (CR) v Olimpia (Hon)....4-0
14.04.96	Olimpia v Saprissa

Second Round

Series D

t.b.a.	Comunicaciones v Winner Series B
t.b.a.	Winner Series B v Comunicaciones

Third Round

Series E

t.b.a.	Juventus (Bel) v Winner Series D
t.b.a.	Winner Series D v Juventus

Series F

t.b.a.	Necaxa (Mex) v Winner Series C
t.b.a.	Winner Series C v Necaxa

GROUP 2

First Round

Series G

15.03.96	Arabe Unido (Pan) v Real Esteli (Nic) .1-1
17.03.96	Arabe Unido v Real Esteli....1-0

WORLD SERVICE

LEBANON

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ansar	19	16	2	1	47	9	50
Safa	19	10	4	5	30	17	34
Al Borj	19	8	9	2	21	15	33
Homentmen	19	9	5	5	39	24	32
Al Nejma	19	8	7	4	23	21	31
Al Tadamon Tyr	19	7	7	5	30	26	28
Shabah Al-Sahel	19	6	6	7	20	23	24
La Sagesse	19	5	8	6	25	26	23
Homenmen	19	5	7	7	25	28	22
Racing Club	19	5	7	7	23	27	22
Riyadha Wal Adab	19	5	6	8	17	27	21
Al Akhaa Aley	19	4	7	8	21	24	19
Harakat Al-Shabab	19	4	4	11	20	32	16
Al Ahly Sarba	19	0	3	16	8	50	3

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sharjah SC	14	8	3	3	24	15	27
Al Wasl	14	7	4	3	24	14	25
Al Nasr	14	6	5	3	13	13	23
Al Khalij	14	4	7	3	12	11	19
Al Shabab	14	4	6	4	16	15	18
Al Ain	14	4	5	5	12	9	17
Al Wahda	14	3	7	4	11	11	16
Al Shaab	14	2	9	3	15	12	15
Bani Yas	14	4	3	7	13	26	15
Al Ahly	14	0	7	7	9	18	7

JAPAN

XEROX SUPER CUP
SATURDAY, MARCH 9

NAGOYA GRAMPUS EIGHT 2 (Okayama 29, Fukuda 39)
YOKOHAMA MARINOS 0 Att: 39,570

J.LEAGUE
SATURDAY, MARCH 16

YOKOHAMA MARINOS 1 (Acosta 46 pen)
GAMBA OSAKA 2 (Mladenovic 44, 58) Att: 11,728

VERDY KAWASAKI 1 (Kazuyoshi Miura 34)
KYOTO PURPLE SANGA 0 Att: 12,835

JUBILO IWATA 3 (Nakayama 48, 89, Fujita 89)
AVISPA FUKUOKA 0 Att: 13,439

KASHIMA ANTLERS 4 (Mazinho 20, 28, Hasegawa 65, 75)
SHIMIZU S-PULSE 1 (Sawanobori 10) Att: 15,922

CEREZO OSAKA 0
YOKOHAMA FLUGELS 2 (Evair 44, Moriyama 73) Att: 8,087

URAWA RED DIAMONDS 2 (Fukunaga 9. 65)
KASHIWA REYSOL 1 (Watanabe 24) Att: 20,124

NAGOYA GRAMPUS EIGHT 4 (Stojkovic 20, Kina 47, Asano 66, Mochizuki 77)
BELLMARE HIRATSUKA 1 (Sorimachi 82) Att: 22,021

JEF UNITED ICHIHARA 0
SANFRECCE HIROSHIMA 1 (Huistra 60) Att: 10,722

ASIAN CUP

(Group winners qualify for finals)
(United Arab Emirates qualify as hosts)
(Japan qualify as defending champions)

GROUP 1
(Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam)

04.08.96 Vietnam v Taiwan
05.08.96 South Korea v Guam
07.08.96 Vietnam v Guam
08.08.96 South Korea v Taiwan
10.08.96 Guam v Taiwan
11.08.96 Vietnam v South Korea

GROUP 2
(Hong Kong)

30.01.96 Hong Kong v Philippines.....8-0
30.01.96 China v Macao.....7-1
01.02.96 Philippines v China.....0-7
01.02.96 Hong Kong v Macao.....4-1
04.02.96 Macao v Philippines.....5-1
04.02.96 Hong Kong v China.....0-2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
China	3	3	0	0	16	1	9
Hong Kong	3	2	0	1	12	3	6
Macao	3	1	0	2	7	12	3
Philippines	3	0	0	3	1	20	0

GROUP 3
(Bangkok)

27.06.96 Thailand v Maldives
27.06.96 Burma v Singapore
29.06.96 Thaliand v Burma
29.06.96 Maldives v Singapore
01.07.96 Thailand v Singapore
01.07.96 Burma v Maldives
(Singapore)
04.07.96 Thailand v Maldives
04.07.96 Singapore v Burma
07.07.96 Thailand v Burma
07.07.96 Singapore v Maldvives
09.07.96 Burma v Maldives
09.07.96 Singapore v Thailand

GROUP 4
(Selangor, Malaysia)

02.03.96 Malaysia v Indonesia.....0-0
04.03.96 Indonesia v India.....7-1
07.03.96 Malaysia v India.....5-2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Indonesia	2	1	1	0	7	1	4
Malaysia	2	1	1	0	5	2	4
India	1	0	0	1	1	7	0

GROUP 5
(Tehran, Iran)

10.06.96 Oman v Sri Lanka
10.06.96 Iran v Nepal
12.06.96 Oman v Nepal
12.06.96 Iran v Sri Lanka
14.06.96 Sri Lanka v Nepal
14.06.96 Iran v Oman
(Muscat, Oman)
17.06.96 Iran v Sri Lanka
17.06.96 Oman v Nepal
19.06.96 Iran v Nepal
19.06.96 Oman v Sri Lanka
21.06.96 Nepal v Sri Lanka
21.06.96 Oman v Iran

GROUP 6
(Amman, Jordan)

07.08.96 Jordan v Pakistan
07.08.96 Iraq v Bangladesh
09.08.96 Pakistan v Iraq
09.08.96 Jordan v Bangladesh
11.08.96 Bangladesh v Pakistan
11.08.96 Jordan v Iraq

GROUP 7
(home & away)

21.06.96 Kazakhstan v Qatar
21.06.96 Syria v Kazakshtan
28.06.96 Qatar v Syria
05.07.96 Qatar v Kazakhstan
12.07.96 Kazakhstan v Syria
19.07.96 Syria v Qatar

GROUP 8
(home & away)

14.04.96 Uzbekistan v Bahrain
17.04.96 Tajikistan v Bahrain
08.05.96 Tajikistan v Uzbekistan
26.05.96 Bahrain v Uzbekistan
31.05.96 Bahrain v Tajikistan
19.06.96 Uzbekistan v Tajikistan

GROUP 9
(Riyadh, Saudi Arabia)

24.01.96 Saudi Arabia v Kyrgyzstan.....3-0
26.01.96 Yemen v Kyrgyzstan.....1-0
28.01.96 Saudi Arabia v Yemen.....4-0
31.01.96 Saudi Arabia v Kyrgyzstan.....2-0
02.02.96 Kyrgyzstan v Yemen.....3-1
04.02.96 Yemen v Saudi Arabia.....0-1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Saudi Arabia	4	4	0	0	10	0	12
Kyrgyzstan	4	1	0	3	3	7	3
Yemen	4	1	0	3	2	8	3

GROUP 10
(home & away)

10.03.96 Turkmenistan v Kuwait.....2-2
22.03.96 Kuwait v Turkmenistan.....2-0
12.05.96 Lebanon v Turkmenistan
26.05.96 Turkmenistan v Lebanon
09.06.96 Lebanon v Kuwait
20.06.96 Kuwait v Lebanon

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kuwait	2	1	1	0	4	2	4
Turkmenistan	2	0	1	1	2	4	1
Lebanon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

FINAL TOURNAMENT
Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Dec 3-20, 1996

OLYMPIC QUALIFIERS

AFRICA

3RD ROUND

GROUP 1
03.03.96 Zimbabwe v Nigeria.....0-1
17.03.96 Nigeria v Zimbabwe.....1-0
Nigeria won 2-0 on agg

GROUP 2
03.03.96 Tunisia v Guinea.....5-2
17.03.96 Guinea v Tunisia.....2-0
Tunisia won 5-4 on agg

GROUP 3
03.03.96 Ghana v Cameroon.....3-0
17.03.96 Cameroon v Ghana.....0-0
Ghana won 3-0 on agg

Nigeria, Tunisia & Ghana qualify for Atlanta

CONMEBOL

FIRST ROUND

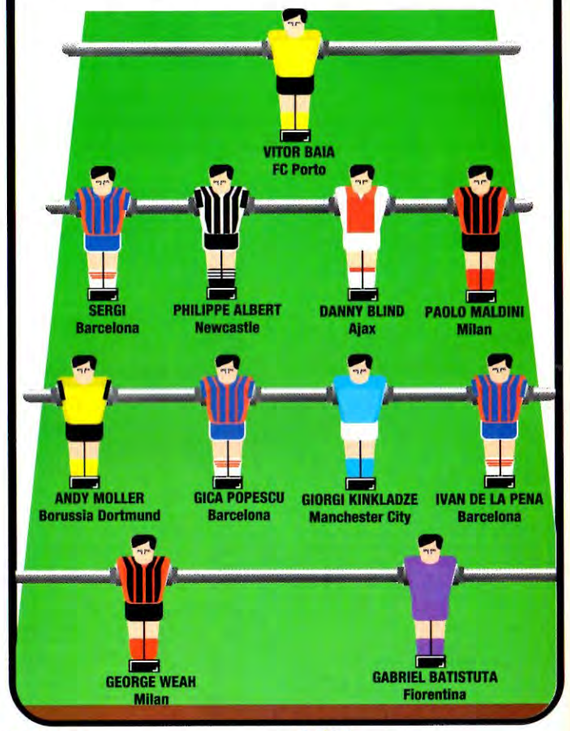
GROUP A TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brazil	4	3	1	0	11	3	10
Uruguay	4	3	1	0	9	4	10
Bolivia	4	1	0	3	6	8	3
Paraguay	4	1	0	3	8	12	3
Peru	4	1	0	3	7	13	3

Brazil & Uruguay qualify for final round

ESM
EUROPEAN SPORTS MAGAZINES

This the ESM Team of the Month for February 1996, based on votes from journalists at *WORLD SOCCER*, *A Bola* (Portugal), *don balon* (Spain), *Foot* (Belgium), *Kicker* (Germany), *Gazzetta dello Sport* (Italy), *onze mondial* (France), *Sport* (Switzerland), *Voetbal International* (Holland).



GROUP B TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Argentina	4	4	0	0	15	1	12
Venezuela	4	2	1	1	6	5	7
Chile	4	1	2	1	8	5	5
Colombia	4	0	2	2	6	11	2
Ecuador	4	0	1	3	5	18	1

Argentina & Venezuela qualify for final round

FINAL ROUND
(at Mar del Plata, & Tandil)

01.03.96 Brazil v Venezuela.....5-0
01.03.96 Argentina v Uruguay.....2-0
03.03.96 Argentina v Venezuela.....2-0
03.03.96 Brazil v Uruguay.....3-1
06.03.96 Uruguay v Venezuela.....3-1
06.03.96 Brazil v Argentina.....2-2

FINAL TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brazil	3	2	1	0	10	3	7
Argentina	3	2	1	0	6	2	7
Uruguay	3	1	0	2	4	6	3
Venezuela	3	0	0	3	1	10	0

Brazil & Argentina qualify for Atlanta

OCEANIA

PLAY-OFF
1ST LEG
26.05.96 CONCACAF r-up v Australia
2ND LEG
02.06.96 Australia v CONCACAF r-up
Winners qualify for Atlanta

ASIA

2ND ROUND

GROUP A
16.03.96 Iraq v Japan.....1-1
16.03.96 UAE v Oman.....1-3
18.03.96 Iraq v UAE.....3-1
18.03.96 Japan v Oman.....4-1
20.03.96 Iraq v Oman.....1-0
20.03.96 Japan v UAE.....1-0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Japan	3	2	1	0	6	2	7
Iraq	3	2	1	0	5	2	7
Oman	3	1	0	2	4	6	3
UAE	3	0	0	3	2	7	0

GROUP B
17.03.96 South Korea v Saudi Arabia...1-1
17.03.96 Kazakhstan v China.....2-4
19.03.96 China v Saudi Arabia.....1-1
19.03.96 Kazakhstan v South Korea.....1-2
21.03.96 China v South Korea
21.03.96 Kazakhstan v Saudi Arabia

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
China	2	1	1	0	5	3	4
South Korea	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Saudi Arabia	2	0	2	0	2	2	2
Kazakhstan	2	0	0	2	3	6	0

SEMI-FINALS
24.03.96 Japan v Winners Gp B
24.03.96 Winners Gp B v Iraq

THIRD-PLACE PLAY-OFF
27.03.96 semi-final losers

FINAL
27.03.96 semi-final winners

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202	Fred Grim	AJAX	0
206	Stefan Klos	BORU	-7
207	Wolfgang De Beer	BORU	0
223	Angelo Peruzzi	JUVE	1
224	Michaelangelo Rampulla	JUVE	2
227	Grzegorz Szamotulski	LEGI	0
228	Tomasz Borkowski	LEGI	0
229	Dominique Casagrande	NANT	1
230	David Marraud	NANT	-1
232	Jozef Wandzik	PANA	9
233	Antonios Nikopolidis	PANA	0
239	Francisco Buyo	REAL	1
240	Jose Canizares	REAL	-2
244	Stanislav Cherchesov	SPAR	2
245	Dmitri Tyapushkin	SPAR	0
300	Danny Blind	AJAX	7
302	Frank F De Boer	AJAX	15
303	Michael Reiziger	AJAX	11
304	Sonny Silooy	AJAX	4
305	Winston Bogarde	AJAX	13
306	Marcio Santos	AJAX	0
325	Julio Cesar	BORU	-4
326	Martin Kree	BORU	2
327	Marco Kurz	BORU	0
328	Gunter Kutowski	BORU	0
329	Jurgen Kohler	BORU	-5
330	Matthias Sammer	BORU	-4
332	Bodo Schmidt	BORU	-5
345	Massimo Carrera	JUVE	0
346	Ciro Ferrara	JUVE	3
347	Pierto Vierchowod	JUVE	0
348	Luca Fusi	JUVE	-2
349	Sergio Porrini	JUVE	2
350	Moreno Torricelli	JUVE	11
352	Gianluca Pessotto	JUVE	4
353	Alessio Tacchinardi	JUVE	1
354	Alessandro Orlando	JUVE	0
355	Juan Pablo Sorin	JUVE	-2
365	Zbigniew Mandziejewicz	LEGI	-5
366	Piotr Mosor	LEGI	2
367	Marek Jozwiak	LEGI	2
368	Jacek Zielinski	LEGI	-7
369	Krzysztof Ratajczyk	LEGI	-3
370	Eddy Capron	NANT	-2
372	Jean-Marc Chanelet	NANT	3
373	Eric Decroix	NANT	0
374	Laurent Guyot	NANT	8
375	Serge Le Dizet	NANT	-1
376	Efstratios Apostolakis	PANA	10
377	Georgios S Georgiadis	PANA	15
378	Ioannis Kalitzakis	PANA	5
379	Georgios Kapouranis	PANA	9
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382	Leonidas Christodoulou	PANA	2
400	Miguel Soler	REAL	2
402	Chendo	REAL	-3
403	Nando	REAL	-1
404	Manuel Sanchis	REAL	-1
405	Mikel Lasa	REAL	1
406	Rafael Alkorta	REAL	-1
407	Quique Flores	REAL	0
408	Jose Garcia Calvo	REAL	0
428	Andrei Afanasiev	SPAR	0
429	Viktor Onopko	SPAR	2
430	Ilia Tsirmbalar	SPAR	6
432	Dmitri Khlestov	SPAR	2
433	Yuri Nikiforov	SPAR	30
434	Dmitri Ananko	SPAR	-1
435	Alexander Lipko	SPAR	-2
436	Ramiz Mamedov	SPAR	15
437	Egor Titov	SPAR	-1
438	Andrei Ivanov	SPAR	0
500	Edgar Davids	AJAX	4
502	Jari Litmanen	AJAX	24
503	Martijn Reuser	AJAX	0
504	Arnold Scholten	AJAX	0
505	Kizito 'Kiki' Musampa	AJAX	4
506	Ronald R De Boer	AJAX	4
523	Patrik Berger	BORU	0
524	Thomas Franck	BORU	0
525	Steffen Freund	BORU	0
526	Andreas Moller	BORU	8
527	Knut Reinhardt	BORU	0
528	Stefan Reuter	BORU	0
529	Michael Zorc	BORU	4
546	Antonio Conte	JUVE	8
547	Vladimir Jugovic	JUVE	0
548	Didier Deschamps	JUVE	0
549	Angelo Di Livio	JUVE	4
550	Attilio Lombardo	JUVE	0
552	Giancarlo Marocchi	JUVE	4
553	Paulo Sousa	JUVE	0
563	Leszek Pisz	LEGI	8
564	Adam Fedoruk	LEGI	0
565	Jacek Kacprzak	LEGI	0
566	Gregorz Lewandowski	LEGI	0
567	Radoslaw Michalski	LEGI	0
568	Jacek Bednarz	LEGI	0
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570	Tomasz Wieszczycki	LEGI	0
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575	Claude Makelele	NANT	0
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577	Jocelyn Gourvennec	NANT	0
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579	Georgios Alexopoulos	PANA	0
580	Alexandros Alexoudis	PANA	4
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584	Spiridon Maragos	PANA	0
585	Nikolaos Nioplias	PANA	0
586	Juan Jose Borelli	PANA	0
587	Dimitrios Markos	PANA	4
588	Marinos Ouzounidis	PANA	0
606	Fernando Hierro	REAL	4
607	Michel	REAL	4
608	Luis Milla	REAL	0
609	Fernando Redondo	REAL	0
620	Michael Laudrup	REAL	0
622	Luis Enrique	REAL	0
623	Luis Martinez	REAL	0
624	Sandro	REAL	0
625	Fredy Rincon	REAL	0
632	Andrei Konovalov	SPAR	0
633	Dmitri Alenichev	SPAR	8
634	Vasili Kulkov	SPAR	0
635	Valeri Kechinov	SPAR	8
636	Andrei Piatnitski	SPAR	0
700	Nwankwo Kanu	AJAX	0
702	Finidi George	AJAX	2
703	Patrick Kluivert	AJAX	10
704	Marc Overmars	AJAX	4
705	Nordin Wooter	AJAX	0
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724	Karlheinz Riedle	BORU	2
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726	Heiko Herrlich	BORU	2
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Convention time again

PLANS are being finalised for our third Coaches Convention from June 27-30 1996, when members from the UK and from all around the world will once again gather in Milton Keynes to talk, watch and discuss major football topics and analyse some of the great action from the forthcoming European Championships.

The Association will continue its theme of 'Coaching through the Age Groups' and we are very fortunate to have been successful in obtaining this year a brand new facility – the National Hockey Stadium – for our coaching clinics. It will also host our Banquet on the Saturday evening.

We will start late afternoon on June 27 and by the Sunday lunchtime will have provided in excess of a dozen coaching sessions covering as many aspects of soccer as possible, including fitness, diet and nutrician, psychology, defending and attacking for both the men's and women's game.

In the last issue of *WORLD SOCCER*, we announced that membership now covers over 50 different countries around the world, so we anticipate many visitors from overseas. What a great way to make new contacts and friends by attending. Those who were there last year will vouch for that.

For those who survived last year's Convention, Kevin Keegan, among others, was one of the stars who attended and it is hoped that he will be back again this year.

Already coaches from around Europe have agreed to attend and provide sessions, including our own John Cartwright, the star of last year's sessions, as voted by the sleepy members who had lasted to the end. If we remember correctly, Harald Oyen soon woke them all from their slumber.

So make sure you return the membership slip with your cheque at the earliest opportunity, to ensure you don't miss out on this great event of the Year, as demand for places is expected to be high.

On top of that, in mid-April, we are also attempting a first – two sessions on one day at Ibrox, Glasgow, and Blackburn Rovers' new training ground. This has been caused by the knock-on effect of the bad weather and by one of our original dates coinciding with live FA Cup semi-final matches on television.

You may just be in time to go to one of these events also. Send in the form right as soon as possible.

Convention guest . . . Newcastle manager Kevin Keegan

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LAST WORD

A lesson for Lazio

Not for sale . . . fan power kept Signori at Lazio

WHO 'owns' a football club? The question is prompted by an arrogant remark by Sergio Cragnotti, disputably, in legal and financial terms, the owner of Lazio of Rome.

"I own Lazio," he said. "Not the fans." An indisputable statement if narrowly construed. But a monstrous piece of self-aggrandisement.

Cragnotti, I assume, was still smarting from his defeat by Lazio's fans last summer, when he planned to sell their idol, Beppe Signori, to Parma for a cool 25 billion lire. The fans would not have it.

They massed around the club's new offices, and marched noisily and aggressively through the city to besiege Cragnotti's own offices. And Cragnotti surrendered. Signori stayed with Lazio.

We can, I suppose, understand his rage and frustration. There he was, and is, an immensely wealthy man – or so it appears; you never can quite tell what's what in Italy – pouring vast sums into the club for players. And when he wants to sell one at what seems a highly advantageous price for Lazio, not even to recoup his expenditure, but to buy new players, he is thwarted by the many headed, by people most of whom have hardly a lire with which to bless themselves, but whose combined wrath intimidates him into surrender.

I would be inclined to emend Cragnotti's rash statement, to say that he is indeed the *present* owner of Lazio. He won't 'own' the club for ever. Nobody ever has. Man, after all, is mortal. And my mind goes back to Bob Wall, Arsenal and the Eddie Hapgood affair, many years ago.

When I was at prep school, Eddie Hapgood was my idol. Left-back and captain of Arsenal and England. A peerless performer and an exemplary sportsman. Arsenal to the marrow; though he later, with mixed success, managed Blackburn Rovers, Watford and Bath City.

The exemplary Eddie Hapgood

Bob Wall was at Highbury throughout Hapgood's distinguished career, rising without trace, as Kitty Muggeridge said of David Frost, from office boy to the Ruler of the Queen's Navee; what we would now call chief executive, secretary perhaps, or even Grey Eminence.

Wall published a turgid book of reminiscences, glutinously entitled *Arsenal From The Heart*. What heart? In the book, he traduced Hapgood, claiming that at the end of the war, Hapgood – and even, I believe, his ex-team mate, Gentleman Jack Crayston – had demanded a benefit, and was refused. Arsenal at that time were well in the red.

Hapgood, Wall pursued, had appealed to the Football League, without success. Then, when matters improved at Highbury, and Arsenal did offer him the money, Hapgood refused it.

By coincidence, soon after this, I met Hapgood for the first time. I was making a TV documentary in the series *One Pair Of Eyes*, and went to Weymouth to interview him, as an old hero. He had been in charge of a hostel for apprentices of the Atomic Energy authority.

He was not in the best of shape, with heart trouble, on pills, and inclined to be lachrymose. But when I told him of Wall's accusation, he was incensed. All lies, he said; and produced a file to prove it. Though from the first I'd smelt a rat, because benefits at that time were strictly optional.

The file held correspondence with Arsenal at the time he had lost his job with Bath City and was down on his luck. He had written to Arsenal for help.

The man who won five Championships and two Cup Finals with them was offered the sum of . . . £30.

I remember telling Danny Blanchflower, illustrious captain of Spurs and Northern Ireland, about it; to his disgust. "Arsenal isn't Bob Wall," he said, "Arsenal isn't its directors. It's all the players who have played for it and the fans who have supported it."

Which surely holds good, as well, for Lazio.

Good for Gullit, bad for Brolin

FOREIGNERS CONTINUE TO SWARM IN, and you wonder – as I did at the time – how wise Newcastle United were to sign Faustino Asprilla, how wise Leeds United were to pay through the nose for Tomas Brolin. For very different reasons.

Parma let them both go, and when an Italian club lets a player go to England, there is always a very good reason. Let the buyer beware.

The exception to the rule, I concede, is Ruud Gullit. After a somewhat tormented season, fluctuating between Sampdoria and Milan, he has enjoyed an Indian summer at Chelsea, and is successfully teaching his younger colleagues how to play.

In the case of Asprilla, talent is one thing, temperament another. Kevin Keegan certainly knew, when he bought him so expensively, that he has the reputation of being a loose cannon, in trouble of some sort almost every time he returns to Colombia and his native city of Tulua.

The cloven hoof, or elbow, did not take long to show. In that game at Maine Road, television quite clearly showed Asprilla elbowing and butting Keith Curle, even if the referee was oblivious.

To protest, as Keegan did, about selective trial by television was disingenuous. Asprilla was, almost literally, bang to rights. Television these days captures *everything*.

Gone are the times when Keegan's argument might have carried some conviction, when only certain games were filmed, when Paul Davis, caught punching Southampton's Glenn Cockerill, might have been considered marginally (though not morally) unlucky, because that game at Highbury just happened to be televised.

And Brolin? A wonderful little player in his time, but that severe injury last season, playing for Sweden, may have cursed his career in perpetuity. I hope not; but Leeds did take a risk. As did Newcastle.

Trouble in store . . . Asprilla tussles with Manchester City's Keith Curle

The story stays the same . . . Montoya still wouldn't be allowed to play in England

King Canute is not dead

THE DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT, in the shape of a surprisingly pretty and genial young minister – who leaped at the chance of a photo call at Upton Park – came down heavily on the side of common sense in the cases of Ilie Dumitrescu and Marc Hottiger.

They can indeed now resume their playing careers in England. What you might call the King Canute syndrome has been vanquished. Sad that it should have taken so long.

Which makes me think of Navarro Montoya, probably still the best goalkeeper in South America. If ever a star footballer was the victim of Catch-22, it was surely he.

A few years ago, Oscar Arce, former coach of Sheffield United, Sunderland and Millwall juniors, manager of Sion in Switzerland and the Ivory Coast national team, wanted, as an agent, to bring Montoya to England.

There was no doubt of Montoya's prestige and prowess. But as a youngster he had somehow played for Colombia while operating there, so he could not play for Argentina. And because he could not play for Argentina, whose best keeper then he surely was, he could not notch up the appearances necessary for him to play in England.

This was happening while American goalkeepers with extremely vague qualifications seemed to be coming through at will. As things stand, Navarro Montoya would still be ineligible to play in England.

As I have said before, surely each case should be examined on its merits. As things stand, the King Canute syndrome remains potentially operative. Not least in Italy where the union boss Sergio Campana wants ALL non-European Union players banned!

Soccer Cities COPENHAGEN

Jim Holden on the 16-club centre of Denmark

COPENHAGEN is the oldest soccer city outside Britain; KB – Kobenhavn Boldklub, literally Copenhagen Ballclub – was formed as early as 1876. And though the Danes play every kind of sport, from cricket to handball, soccer remains Denmark's premier game.

KB are now a non-league amateur team – kept alive by stalwarts who refused to accept the merger of the club with rivals B1903 in 1992 to form the new FC Copenhagen. It is a sign of changing times, yet an illustration of an old truth, too: there has never been just a single club, whatever the name, for *Kobenhavners* to focus on. And there never will be.

Sixteen clubs from the capital – population one-and-a-half million out of Denmark's total of five million – have played in the country's First Division since an organised league was begun in 1913. Parochial loyalties abound, even if clubs rise and fall with sometimes astonishing rapidity.

Instead, the focus has always been the national side, who play at the Parken stadium, within walking distance of the city centre – or a few stops on the tram from outside the Tivoli Gardens at the Radhuspladsen town hall square.

For many years it was known as the Idraetsparken, an intimate 40,000 ground where fans dressed up in red and white and Viking uniforms to cheer on their country, creating an electric yet friendly partisan atmosphere.

The most famous match, everyone agrees, was the 4-2 defeat of the Soviet Union on June 5, 1985. It was a national holiday, with Copenhagen sweltering in summer sun. The football matched the festival mood, with Michael Laudrup and Preben Elkjaer both scoring twice for the Dynamite side coached by Sepp Piontek. A whole book has been written about that giddy afternoon when an entire city seemed transfixed by a football fixture.

Copenhagen was simply awash with the *Roligans*, a peaceful army of fans deliberately named to contrast with hooligans from more 'sophisticated' soccer cities. That summed up the spirit of football in Denmark, where a naive joy in the game has been almost as important as the quest for success. It is, maybe, the prerogative of the small nation.

Copenhagen's Parken stadium

By the early 1990s the stadium had been transformed into a modern all-seater, and renamed Parken. It hosts European club finals and can count itself one of the best on the continent, but many believe it lacks the old spirit. Old, new or borrowed, it has always been a club ground, too, for KB and now FC Copenhagen, with other teams from the capital sometimes staging big games there to exploit the extra capacity.

Literally next door is the romantic *Osterbro* ground, home of another of Denmark's oldest clubs, B93, founded as the name suggests in 1893. They have been champions nine times, the last way back in 1946. It is a measure of Copenhagen's dominance that not until 1954, 41 years after an organised league was begun, did a club from outside the city – Koge – win the title.

Crowds were huge after the war, KB regularly attracting 25,000 fans, with working class heroes Frem, who played in the Valby district close to the Carlsberg brewery, almost as popular. Frem, founded in 1886, were the team of the poor people, the antithesis of KB.

They are non-league now, too, after going bankrupt trying to compete in the new professional era.

Another set of fans entirely supported the fourth great Copenhagen team of the time, AB, the Akademisk Boldklub. This was the student team who played in the Faellen park close to the centre of the city, winning three of their titles just after the Second World War. The heart was ripped from the club when they decided to move out to the suburb of Bagsvaerd, and then sadly descended into non-league until a recent revival.

Viking spirit . . . *Kobenhavners* rally round the same flag only when Denmark plays

Greater Copenhagen has sprawled out for miles from the harbour where the Little Mermaid statue greets visiting ships, and many areas have developed their own fine teams. For example, B1903 played at Gentofte until their merger with KB.

The first major modern suburban club was Hvidovre, title winners in 1966. They were followed by Vanlose and Lyngby, who have also been champions, and others like Bronshoj, Fremad Amager and Kastrup. Those teams have yo-yoed up and down from non-league to the First Division and back again.

'Not until 1954 did a club from outside Copenhagen – Kobe – win the Danish League'

But the greatest success from the outskirts, of course, are Brondby. They were founded only in 1964 as a parks side, but graduated quickly through the intensely meritocratic Danish system to become the club of the 1980s.

The smart Brondbystadion, a few miles south of the city centre, is now the home of the Danish FA (DBU), who have moved their offices from the old Idraetsparken.

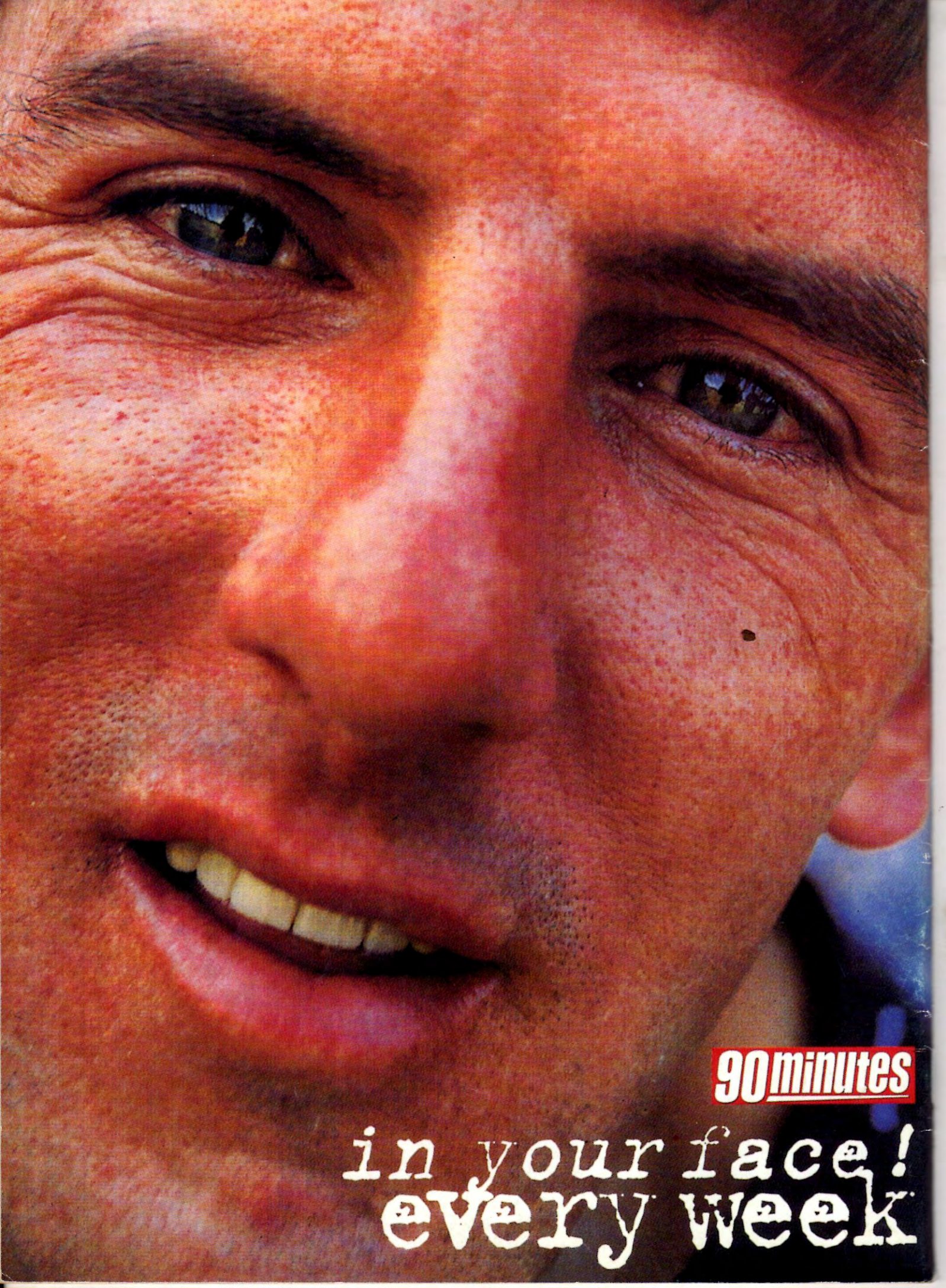
A clutch of League titles and famous victories over major foreign clubs sides, culminating in reaching the 1991 UEFA Cup semi-finals, made Brondby Copenhagen's premier club. Yet they revel in being a 'Danish' team rather than a *Kobenhavner* team. That has spawned a particular rivalry with FC Copenhagen, which has even seen the first sporadic outbreaks of crowd violence.

But problems are isolated, and an encouraging feature of recent times has been the re-emergence of B93, AB and Hvidovre to challenge for promotion to the new Superliga, where Lyngby are already another capital presence.

Copenhagen is simply too large a city in relation to the size of Denmark to become a one-team town. Except, that is, for one period in the early 1960s when a Copenhagen representative XI called Staevnet competed in the old Fairs Cup. Staevnet drew huge crowds to the Idraetsparken, playing opponents such as Arsenal. The experiment soon ended, although older fans cherish the memory of the encounters when their united city took on the rest of Europe.

Flashback

June 1972, and Helmut Schön holds a trophy aloft. Nothing new in that – he was perhaps the most successful national manager ever – but the picture is particularly poignant in view of his death, in February, and the imminence of Germany's forthcoming challenge in the European Championships. For the trophy in the picture is the one his German squad won in the 1972 Euro event, when they beat the USSR 3-0 in the Final.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